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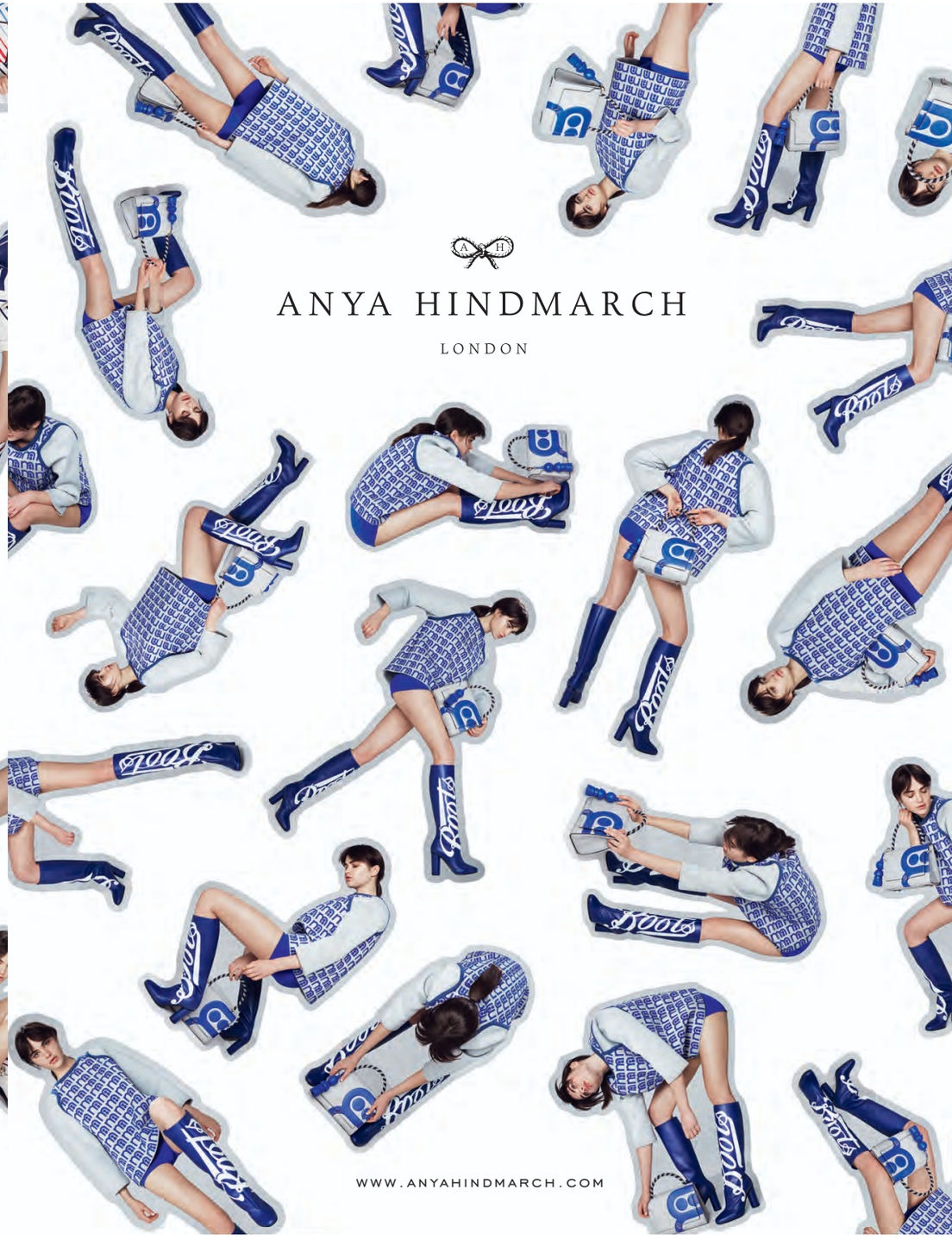
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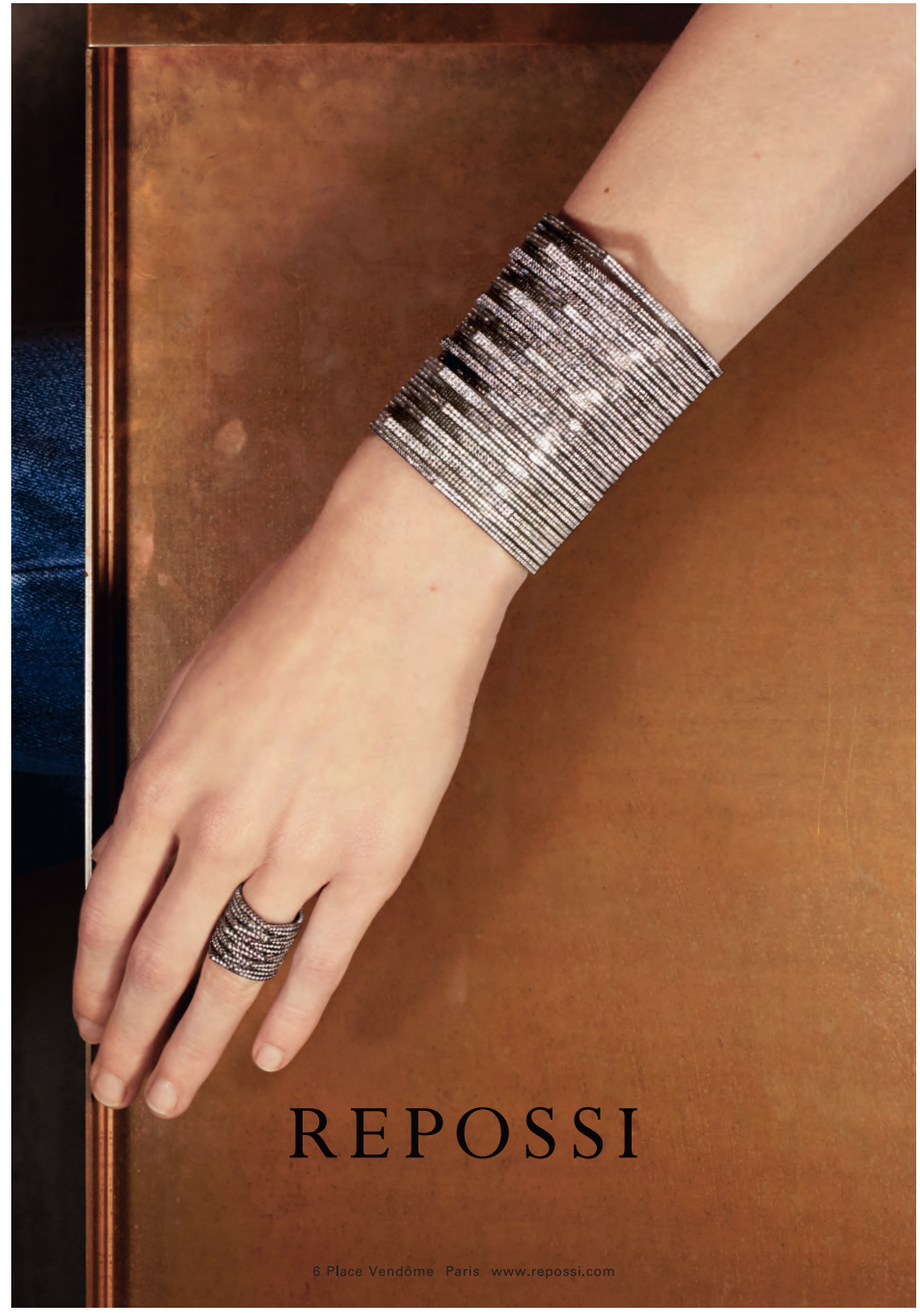
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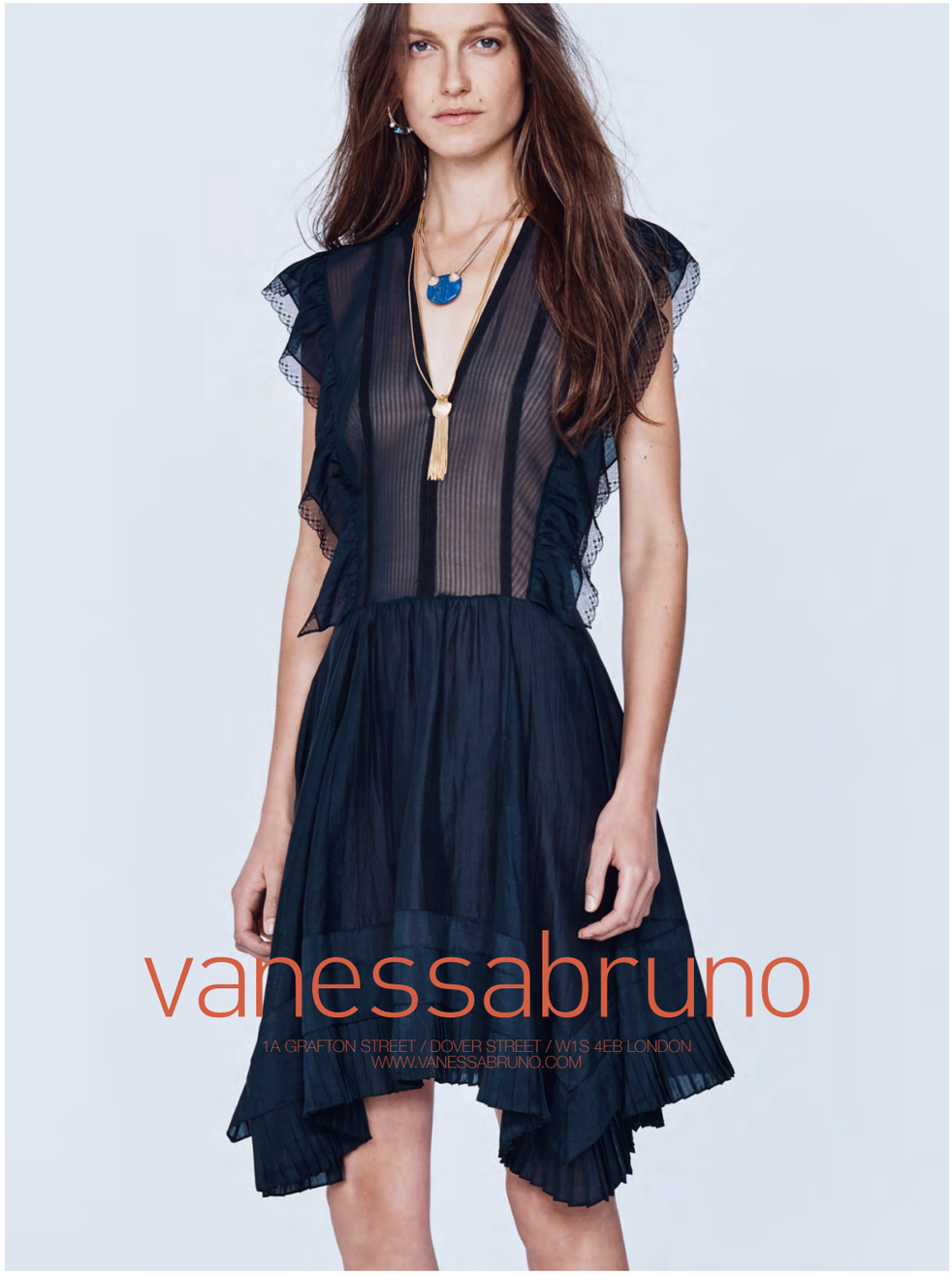

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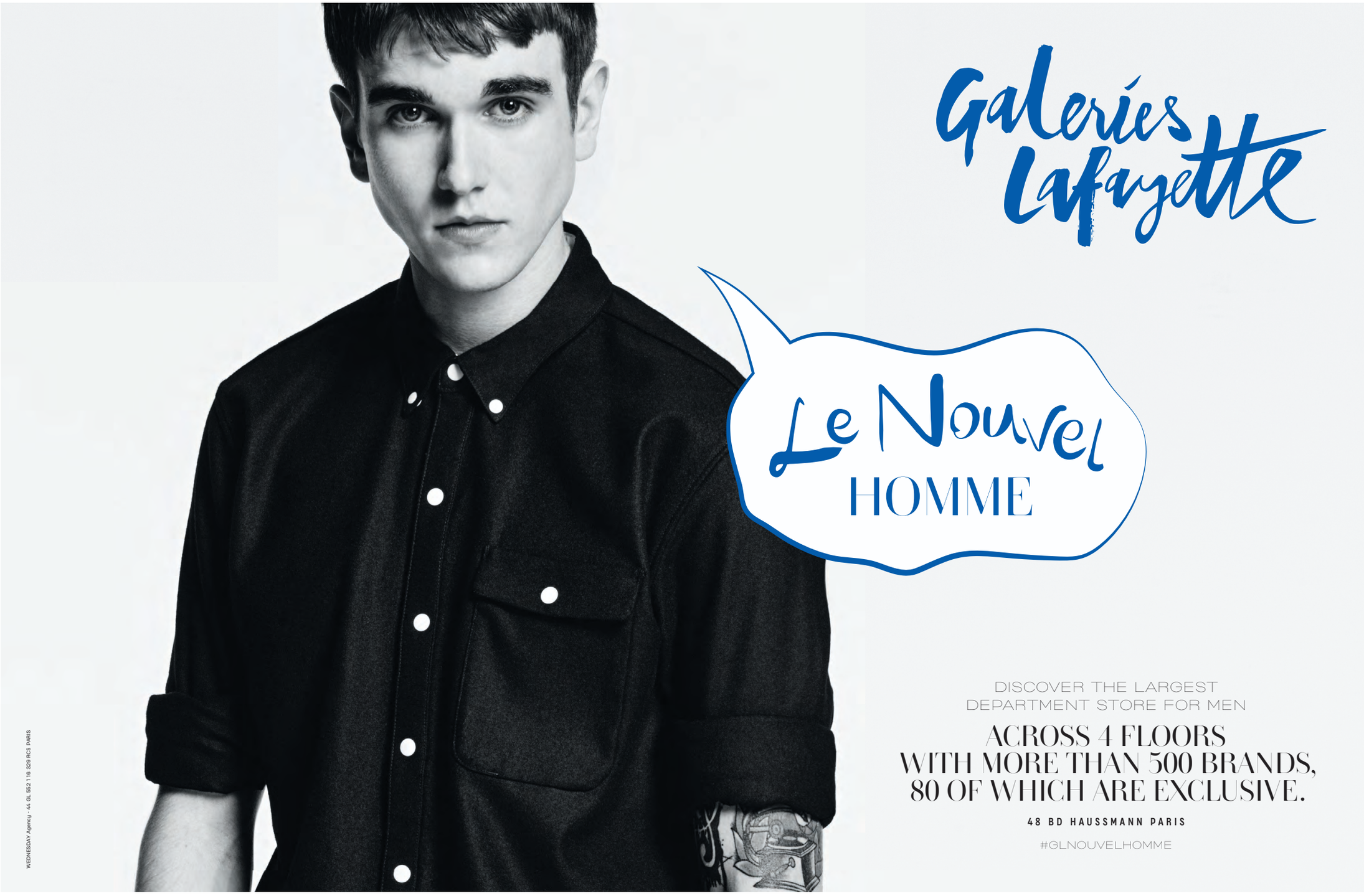

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Steven Meisel
Untitled (Self-portrait #5)
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Contributors

Jodie Barnes is British. He is a stylist and brand consultant who currently resides in Brooklyn, New York. Jodie laughs a lot and his laughter is triggered by different things.

Mark Borthwick was raised in London. He is a photographer, artist and musician based in Brooklyn, New York. For Mark, 'the sheer joy of watching others laugh at me while I'm farting during our morning yoga class lights up a smile – it's one's letting go!'

Alexander Fury is from a village in the bleakest Pennines just outside Manchester. He is a fashion editor, journalist and critic, and a menswear critic for US Vogue.com. He lives in East London ('for my sins'). What last made Alex laugh was Bob the Drag Queen on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, and his rabbit.

Laia Garcia comes from San Juan, Puerto Rico. She is the deputy editor of Lenny and resides in Brooklyn, New York. Laia feels lucky to say that she laughs often. The last time was while watching *Late Night with Seth Meyers* when one of his writers did an interpretative dance to the theme tune from *Charlie Rose*. Laia really loves interpretative dance.

Zoe Ghertner grew up in rural New York state. She is now a photographer and lives in California. Zoe laughs at her own bad jokes or when playing with her dog, who makes her laugh a lot.

Hung Huang is from Beijing, China. She dabbles. Currently she lives under a very suspicious cloud. The last time that she laughed was at a dinner when someone said: 'China dream, made in Hollywood.'

Emily King doesn't know if she is 'from' London, but she is very much a Londoner. She writes and curates. She studied design history and tends to view the world through that prism. Emily last laughed while watching the Coen brothers' *Hail, Caesar!* – 'it was the conjunction of Communists, cucumber sandwiches and George Clooney's naked thighs that got me'. She is embarrassingly prone to laughing at slapstick.

Alessandro Michele is from Rome where he still lives. He is the creative director of Gucci. What makes Alessandro laugh? 'Jokes!'

Loïc Prigent is from the 'west of the west of France'. He tries to document fashion in the city of Paris, where he lives. Fashion makes Loïc laugh a lot; he loves its humour and absurdities.

Jeremy Scott is from America! He creates controversy! He lives in Hollywood! He laughs often and he laughs out loud!

Matthew Stone was born in London, but grew up in a small cottage with no mains electricity on the banks of the Kennet & Avon Canal. He is an artist and shaman. He currently lives next door to his studio in Hackney, London. Matthew has an Ibizan Hound puppy called Beau who makes him laugh. Recently Beau fell off the sofa and was evidently so embarrassed that he slunk off and put himself to bed. This made Matthew laugh.

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Oro Suede Hammock Bag, 2016

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Spring Summer 2016

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Much of the current ado about fashion has focused on the industry's varying rapport with immediacy. Everyone, it seems, wants to be seen to be keeping up with the digital giants.

But, in its own way, fashion is reacting in quicker and nimbler ways than perhaps any other industry right now. Just look at the seismic changes that have taken place overnight at Loewe, Balenciaga, and, most significantly, Gucci. Houses that seemingly only months ago felt lacklustre have reinvented themselves as beacons of creative zeal and confidence.

In this issue of *System*, we've chosen to take a closer look at the trend for instant rebirth: what's propelling it, why is it working, what's the actual shelf life of the changes being made? And, tellingly, how are the individuals behind it reacting to fashion's assignment du jour: reinvent *everything*. Immediately.

Depending on who you ask, Gucci's creative director Alessandro Michele and CEO Marco Bizzarri are either staring down the barrel of a €4-billion gun, or having the time of their lives, empowered by the shared desire to transform the brand into a booming business synonymous with joy and colour, warmth and humility.

Ironically, only time will tell how Michele and Bizzarri navigate the industry's new-found love of the instant brand revamp. Will the 'revampers' themselves become revamped? Or will they steer the ephemeral towards something that endures? In the meantime, our Gucci cover story (page 62) presents the Italian duo as diametrically opposed in appearance and character yet mutually admiring, and giving off an aura pitched somewhere between laidback and supremely confident.

Consider them fashion's happiest couple.

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‘We smile, we say hello to everybody, we enjoy ourselves.’

How Alessandro Michele and Marco Bizzarri are making Gucci the feel-good fashion brand.

By Jonathan Wingfield
Photographs by Juergen Teller

Although we're still only in April, fashion in 2016 has already defined itself as a chaotic and confusing place to be. If you believe all the daily reports and rumours clogging up our inboxes, there's precious little to smile about: fashion is a 'broken system' in need of disruption, with designers in a perpetual state of anxiety, houses fluctuating between buoyancy and irrelevance, key markets feeling the pinch, and consumers snapping at the industry's heels, demanding more product in less time.

Against the backdrop of all the perceived hysteria, the luxury Italian house of Gucci appears to be stubbornly – perhaps even gleefully – bucking the system, thumbing its nose to the general mood of uncertainty. Presenting itself as unshackled and reinvigorated, Gucci's new era continues to steadily unfold with healthy sales and an aura pitched somewhere between carefree and supremely confident. Barely 15 months into a monumental reinvention, the overriding sensation within the company appears to be unity and fearlessness.

'When Marco asked to see me, I was on the verge of leaving Gucci. I don't want to say that I'd signed another contract, but that was more or less the case.'

It wasn't always so, of course. The events leading up to today's newfound optimism can be traced back to long before December 2014, when faltering sales and lukewarm reviews finally left couple Patrizio di Marco and Frida Giannini – Gucci CEO and creative director respectively – helpless in the face of their inevitable and unceremonious ousting. The brand had simply stagnated for too long, never truly able to sustain the phenomenal period of growth and gravitas that Tom Ford and CEO Domenico de Sole commanded between 1994 and 2004. When François-Henri Pinault, the chairman of Gucci's owner Kering, replaced di Marco with Marco Bizzarri – a high-achieving CEO previously at Stella McCartney and Bottega Veneta – it felt as if he were drawing a line in the sand. Announcing a new era. A revolution, even. And when Bizzarri announced that Gucci's new creative director would be Alessandro Michele, speculation surrounding the brand reached new heights. While Michele's name was met with a universal, '*Who*?'

Bizzarri immediately empowered Michele – until then a behind-the-scenes accessories designer who had first arrived at Gucci under Tom Ford and worked his way through the ranks to become Giannini's right-hand – to completely reinvent the visual codes of the brand, overseeing ready-to-wear, accessories, eyewear, jewellery, children's wear, the beauty and fragrance divisions, advertising, digital and social-media platforms and store design. Meaning more responsibility – and more power – than practically any other creative director on the planet. Overnight, Michele dramatically called time on Giannini's first-degree polished glam, in favour of an idiosyncratic patchwork of quirky vintage looks, insouciant cool, geek-chic women and androgynous men. Where Giannini had spent the previous decade paring back Gucci's double-G logo and signature green-red-green web stripe, Michele transformed them into colourful, geometric stars of the show. Rarely has there been such a comprehensive about-turn of a brand's DNA – whether in fashion or beyond – and at such staggering scale (Gucci has an annual turnover of approximately €4 billion). Inevitably, all eyes have since been on Bizzarri and Michele: scrutinizing their actions, showering the collections and Glen Luchford's advertising-campaign imagery with renewed interest, while questioning the long-term commercial wisdom of such a brazen move.

Which leads us to the other debate that seems to have shaped much of the fashion landscape of recent times: the rapport between a house's CEO and its creative director. As has been proven, notably at Gucci, the synergy between a business mind and artistic visionary can produce spectacular results for a fashion brand looking to expand its market share while maintaining an all-important sense of directional cool and desirability. Ford and de Sole were arguably the greatest example of this in the history of the industry, having transformed the dusty Italian house on the verge of bankruptcy into an entire luxury fashion group. Indeed, behind many of luxury fashion's most significant success stories, past and present, lies a healthy professional (sometimes also romantic) relationship between CEO and creative director: Yves Saint Laurent and partner Pierre Bergé, Miuccia Prada and her husband Patrizio Bertelli, Marc Jacobs with Robert Duffy at his eponymous label and Yves Carcelle at Louis Vuitton, and, although operating on a smaller scale, Rei Kawakubo and husband Adrian Joffe, who continue to make Comme des Garçons a relevant and desirable brand.

But for every love story, there's also heartache and bitterness, or simply a lack of chemistry, and some designers and CEOs have fallen foul of the very relationship that should have been paramount to their professional success. In fact, some seem to have triumphed in *spite* of backroom tensions.

So what about the partnership at the heart of Gucci's current renaissance? Behind the kaleidoscopic chiffon dresses, abundance of floral and animal prints, fur-lined backless loafers, oversized glasses and pussy bows, are two very Italian men who in appearance and character couldn't possibly be more different. Bizzarri is well over 6ft tall, spectacularly bald and bespectacled, and only ever seen in black three-piece tailored suits that accentuate his stoop. Michele is significantly shorter, with a long flowing black mane and biblical beard, often dressed in worn-out jeans and white T-shirt, with multiple rings, trinkets, charms, chains, beads and bracelets adorning his neck, wrists, and every last finger. Bizzarri comes across as warm and gregarious, yet impatient, full of nervous energy, and talks at such ferocious pace that an hour's conversation with him results in over 10,000 words of written transcript (approximately twice the average). Michele, on the other hand, is a languid and gentle soul, a little uneasy, who speaks in slow, recurring passages (possibly because his English is limited), underscored by liberal use of the words 'love', 'free' and 'beauty'.

Left brain, right brain? Hippy and suit?

With all this in mind, *System* has spent the past few months observing the rapport between Alessandro Michele and Marco Bizzarri, keen to explore the dynamic that's driving one of fashion's biggest businesses. We met with them – both individually and together – to discuss each other, their rollercoaster past year, the future, whether freedom and empowerment are genuinely good for business, the ever-shifting industry, and how a radical change in company culture might affect Gucci's 11,000 members of staff, the fashion industry as a whole, even society at large. And ultimately, to ask if they're actually enjoying themselves.

Part One
Wednesday, January 20, 2016
Gucci HQ, Milan

It seems astonishing that Michele's Autumn/Winter 2016 menswear show signals only his first anniversary as Gucci's creative director. Such is the ubiquity of Gucci's rebranding at his hands – and the company's communications prowess – that for those with any interest in the brand, it feels like he's been sending his colourful, whimsical interpretation down the catwalk for years.

'I was basically Mr. Nobody. I still find it tough coming to terms with being Gucci's creative director; I feel more like a child playing someone else's role.'

The show itself is very much the reaffirmation of Michele's overall vision for the brand, freely mixing sartorial codes and gender to create a mood befitting the times. Where Gucci was once Tom Ford's love letter to the hedonism of Studio 45-era New York, aligning that mood with the brash and powerful sexuality of Sharon Stone's character in the then contemporary film, *Basic Instinct*, Michele's interpretation feels more like an ode to the fragile and neurotic characters in Wes Anderson's film *The Royal Tenenbaums*. Indeed, Michele's is a new aristocracy – the ennui-ridden sons and daughters of Ford's impossibly glamorous go-getters – happier to jet-set in their minds than across the globe.

Forty-eight hours after the show, Alessandro is nestled in the relatively modest office he calls home when visiting Gucci's Milan headquarters (his principal office and design studio are in his home town of Rome). Wonderfully on-brand, it's all Persian rugs, Napoleon III furniture and flea-market finds, and although clearly experiencing post-show fatigue, he greets *System* with hugs and smiles.

You'd been at Gucci for over a decade when you first met Marco Bizzarri. What were your thoughts about the company at that time?

Alessandro Michele: Gucci had become soulless. I obviously knew the company very well and couldn't believe that one of the most powerful brands in the world no longer had any meaning beyond the bags it was selling. There was no soul or story. When Marco asked to see me, I was on the verge of leaving Gucci. I don't want to say I'd signed a contract with another company, but that was more or less the case. And because I already had one foot out the door, I didn't feel any pressure about meeting him or presenting myself.

Tell me about that first meeting.

I guess he wanted to have a conversation with me because I'd been there for a long time, and I knew about the processes within the company, the dynamic of the design team, the

factory in Florence, and so on. We met in my apartment in Rome and it became immediately obvious that Marco was a super-sweet, intelligent, curious and open person. In a very natural way, we started discussing the brand and the company and the vision for the future and my point of view – a cup of coffee and a chat turned into a three-, four-, five-hour long conversation.

What did you take away from that first meeting?
That Marco respects creativity and creative people. He understands that the power of a fashion company lies in its creativity. I mean, when we talk together about fashion he often says, 'I don't know, I don't know, I don't know…' But he knows very well about fashion, and understands what is needed.

to terms with; I feel more like a child playing someone else's role. The evening after the first men's show, I said to Marco, 'I think you are crazy', and I was saying to my boyfriend, 'They're probably going to fire me tomorrow…' But, you know, I had nothing to lose, and if you want to be creative, you cannot care about your position.

Considering your proposition for the brand is so different to that of your predecessor, one presumes that the working environment must have been quite stifling for you up to that point.
Yes, very difficult. As I mentioned, I was on the verge of leaving the company because I was really conscious that I was destroying my soul. What started out as a passion had become a daily job, and I began thinking to myself, 'I don't

new every month? That's not fashion, that's just slavery. And if something is genuinely beautiful, then surely the last thing you'd want to do is throw it away and change it for something new.

You've brought a new sense of fluidity, juxtaposition and ambiguity into Gucci – whether that's expressed through gender, season, or the mix of vintage and contemporary. Are these things fundamental to your new philosophy?
I didn't really plan those things. It was more a case of expressing romanticism or what it meant to be unique in contemporary society, or simply the idea of freedom. And I think the power of my work is that I had the courage to bring this kind of diversity together, and create a dialogue from those juxtapositions. My way of working is to put things

'Changing a company that's not doing well but that still generates lots of money is particularly challenging – it's a moving train, there's a lot at stake.'

And you explained your vision of what you thought Gucci could become?
Well, to be honest, my vision was quite complicated in terms of aesthetic and the way it could be put together. I explained that while I see myself as Italian, I also feel like a contaminated Italian because I'd lived in London and it had changed my perception of things. I think Marco was quite fascinated by this. We shared exactly the same vision for the brand, but I never had it in my mind that he would decide to place me as creative director of Gucci.

Do you see his decision as proof of his fearlessness?
I think he was really brave because, come on, I was basically Mr. Nobody who just worked hard at Gucci for many years. I still find it tough to come

even want to work in fashion anymore; it's become so oppressive'.

Do you think that was symptomatic of the industry at large, beyond Gucci?
Since the end of the 1990s up until quite recently, I think fashion became much too product-oriented, and creativity completely died. I think the first people to sense that were the consumers themselves; they clearly understood that it had all just become a trick to sell things. I'd always referred to myself as a happy slave to fashion, but even *I'd* had enough because fashion was no longer believable. I mean, this idea that you have to constantly change, change, change yourself, and so every single month there is a different bag, a different coat, to help this change. What's fashionable about buying something

together and create a kind of chemical reaction. I feel that by taking fragments that are apparently dead and putting them together in new ways, you create something modern and beautiful.

Because of the scale of Gucci's presence in the market, do you think the changes you've initiated are proving too quick or too radical for many of your consumers to handle?
Sure, Gucci is big, but what we're doing here is a reflection of what is growing and evolving in society, too, and the customers are responding in a good way. It seems strange that fashion doesn't always have the courage to express what is happening beyond fashion.

Did this feel like a risk?
Well, Gucci was in a really bad moment

about a year ago, but of course, making such a big change could be an even bigger risk.

Based on what you've said, it would seem more dangerous *not* to make significant changes.
I agree with you. Ultimately, it's not like I made these changes to a company that wasn't making any money. It would obviously be a lot easier to start a new company from zero, but that wasn't the case. Making change at a company that isn't doing well but that still generates a lot of money is particularly challenging because, you know, it's a moving train. There's a lot at stake. And for sure, it's a big risk – for myself, but above all, for Marco.

Do you feel responsible for him?

his career to date, but also one the fashion industry's most coveted roles. That's not to say he had to beg François-Henri Pinault for the job. Having almost tripled Bottega Veneta's revenue to €1.1 billion during his five years in charge of Kering's leather-goods brand, Bizzarri was appointed the group's overall CEO of Luxury – Couture & Leather Goods division in April 2014 – 'an amazing job that I was just starting to get accustomed to'. So then to be asked to step down and take over the reigns at Gucci just eight months later presented a dilemma. 'But you cannot say no to François-Henri Pinault,' he says, 'and it's not an option to turn down Gucci.'

Bizzarri's Milan office is as slick and minimal as Michele's is busy and decorative, and is perhaps one of the only remnants from Gucci days gone by.

market-driven instead of really driving change or pushing the boundaries of fashion. And thirdly, to enable that change to potentially happen, an important shift in the Gucci company culture and its people needed to take place.

You say that Gucci was no longer pushing the boundaries of fashion. Did you sense a similar period of creative limbo across the other big luxury brands?
Not all brands, but I think we got too used to growth and profitability, and more growth and more profitability. That is obviously great, but ultimately profitability doesn't always help the intangible value of the brand. So you can continue growing the business over two, three, four years, despite the fact that the brand might be losing momen-

'We got too used to growth and profitability. That is obviously great, but ultimately profitability doesn't always help the intangible value of the brand.'

No, because he is light and very intelligent. He's always made me feel at ease, saying, 'Do what you feel is right, don't worry about things; I don't need to look at everything you're doing'. Even though he understands everything that's going on.

Part Two
Tuesday, January 26, 2016
Gucci HQ, Milan

Since last week's menswear show, Marco Bizzarri has been juggling illness with an appearance at the prestigious World Economic Forum in Davos. As the CEO of Kering's cash cow (Gucci constitutes almost two-thirds of the group's overall recurring operating income), the position he's held this past year represents not only the pinnacle of

Admitting he's still feeling a little under the weather, Bizzarri proceeds to down an espresso, turn his phones to silent, and plonk his tall frame into an armchair – all in one fluid movement. Multitasking, it seems, comes naturally to Gucci's CEO.

What was your impression of Gucci at the time François-Henri Pinault asked you to take over the company?
Marco Bizzarri: I think the work done by Patrizio [di Marco] and Frida [Giannini] was quite remarkable in terms of growing in a market that was definitely bullish. There are three things to be considered. Firstly, Gucci grew at that specific moment but it lost the market share because there were other brands growing much, much faster. Secondly, I think Gucci became a little too

tum. At a certain point if the brand is no longer regarded as having value or influence by fashion's opinion leaders, it is going to go down – not slightly or incrementally, but *really* go down, 20 percent or 25 percent.

So significant changes were vital to Gucci's survival.
I don't think it is a matter of the previous management being better or not; that's missing the point. The reality is, at a certain point you just need fresh air to be injected into a brand, and with fresh eyes.

What was the first thing that struck you about the company once you'd taken the CEO role?
The power of this brand. You see that everything you do has immediate and

worldwide visibility, so you can really change things. The power of the people who make up the Gucci company is so much stronger than I will ever be, so you need to make sure that the people follow you and support the changes you want to make. But there is no given format to what these changes should be; you just need to follow your instinct, like when I followed my instinct to appoint Alessandro. He was not even on the list of candidates, but luckily François-Henri Pinault was brave enough to support me 100 percent.

Tell me about your first meeting with Alessandro.
We met for a discussion that I thought would last half an hour and it lasted four or five hours. We were in total agreement about the main Gucci values, the objectives, the positioning and the strategy. And then I said, 'Look, why don't you start working on a document of images that you would want to associate with Gucci's future'.

You say you were both in total agreement of the basic strategy of what you wanted to do with Gucci. Could you summarize the principal values that you had both identified?
Firstly, we needed to make Gucci a leader in fashion once again. Then, the Gucci fashion show needed to become the most exciting and anticipated during the fashion weeks. Then the brand needed to become more modern, and less cold and dark. And the other thing was that I wanted to create a company in which one of the most fundamental assets was respect and humility among its staff. I don't mean that it wasn't there before, but I really wanted to make a point of this, and to use Gucci's power to drive changes in attitude, in and beyond the industry. Besides the fact that he'd shared these great images with me, and that we were in total agreement with the strategy, one of the reasons I decided to go for Alessandro is that he is a super normal, humble, and very respectful person. Of course he has his own opinions, but he always listens. Frankly, he is a breath of fresh air within this industry, and I felt that we needed to become examples within the company of how I expected everyone to behave: respect other people, no harassment, no authority for authority's sake.

Were you looking to change the business model to the same extent that Alessandro was planning to reinvent the creative proposition?
I explained the strategy to François-Henri and we agreed that we would go for it; no back and forth or half-decisions. If you really want to make changes, you cannot compromise. The changes touch every function at Gucci in terms of process, people and organization, all linked to creating a streamlined structure: whether that's fabric creation, the regions, e-commerce, retail excellence, travel retail and wholesale, the supply chain, or becoming more efficient with the locations of products in shops. We have so much information about all this that we can really drive the business, drive the collections to the shops in more efficient ways, and create an entire system that was not present at Gucci before.

Do you think that the consumer is almost playing catch up with the speed and the scale of the changes that you and Alessandro are putting in place?
In terms of internal business changes, they won't really touch the consumer. As for the change in positioning, I don't think there is a set way you can implement these things, especially in fashion. If you really want to make a blast and change the perception of something, then you need to do it super quickly. The longer it takes to alter the position, the longer it takes for the consumer to understand. So maybe you are going to have a period of time when the consumer is a little shaken and doesn't really get it, but in that case you can increase your communication tools to help deliver a clear and consistent message – whether that's via the website, newspaper communications, social media, etc. Sure, we are going to lose clients that we had before but we are going to gain other, younger clients, and this younger generation is going to guarantee the survival of the brand in the future.

In what ways do you see Alessandro's creative proposition in line with broader changes in society?
With Alessandro we wanted to express joy: we wanted something full of colour that would bring joy into the company and the fashion industry. This might sound naive, but we want to enjoy what we do. I mean, if you go into any fashion store today they're all quite similar, and quite boring, and no one seems to be truly considering today's retail experience. People need to start rethinking the way in which fashion is conceived

'Alessandro was not even on the list of candidates, but I followed my instincts and Monsieur Pinault was brave enough to support me 100%.'

and experienced – otherwise the younger generation are just going to move on to something else.

To other brands?
Above all, they could simply decide to spend their money on something else entirely: the digital world or wellness or hotels and travelling. The amount of money that you have as a consumer is always the same; you can have different consumers coming into the industry, but if the offers always remain the same, you're going to experience some level of fatigue. Ultimately, you don't buy fashion because you need a bag or a suit – everyone already has tons of them – you buy it because you fall in love with something; because you see something and think, 'Oh my God, I need to have it', but you don't *need* to have it. That's just a fact.

changes to maintain the budget. But when you make abrupt changes, you have a period where if you are able to drive the machine and get good profit and loss, the business is able to protect the finances. Above all, the collection only plays a small part in the first year.

What percentage of 2015's revenue was made up by Alessandro's collections?
Based on the supply chain in the fashion arena, Alessandro's collections will have impacted only four to five percent of total revenue. So how can an analyst evaluate the result of a change like this in one year? It's impossible. There are so many business activities beyond the collection itself that are able to support the business that you don't see as an analyst: how you fill your shops, how you merchandise the products, what the visuals are like, and so on. You know, if there is a bestseller that you are not able to produce and deliver on time to the shops, that's not Alessandro's fault, it's because the business people are crap.

Do you feel that the changes both you and Alessandro have been introducing are likely to have the same impact on the industry, on consumer behaviour, and on society in general that Tom Ford made during his Gucci era?
Time will tell. Obviously Tom Ford did amazing things, not just in terms of results, but also in influencing a specific moment in time. The positioning of a brand is a combination of two things, one is brand values, the second is consumer behaviour. So what Alessandro is doing in terms of gender layers and fluidity between the sexes is something that is happening beyond Gucci. We obviously couldn't do the same thing today that Tom Ford did because the whole world has completely changed its views on sexuality.

The brand changes you're implementing are being made quickly, society is changing quickly, you even speak extremely quickly! With this in mind, aren't you frustrated by this period of cohabitation in which some Gucci touchpoints represent this exciting new era, while many others have yet to make the shift?
Totally frustrated! You can tell by the speed I speak that I am not patient at all. You should try listening to me when I speak in Italian! Internally, it's easy to communicate to the store in Milan that we're changing, but then you go into a shop in a second-tier city in China and for them nothing's changed. And if those people look at the shows they'll think we've gone crazy. So to bring everyone within the company onto the same page and reassure them that a) we are not crazy, b) we have a new direction, and c) the reason we're changing direction is because we want to become the fashion leader again, I travelled all over the world to meet and speak with them personally.

As far as the customer is concerned, there is very little evidence out there that the 'classic' Gucci loafer still exists, especially in your flagship stores which have more of Alessandro's presence. When I found one in your Via Montenapoleone[1] store, it almost felt like a museum piece, from another era.

Are you willing to accept that that particular cash cow has had its day?
I think some of the products can keep on existing, especially the ones that reflect the history of the brand. Of course, at a certain point, looking at the overall Gucci aesthetic, there will be certain products that appear very old, at which point we'll think about refreshing them or designing them in a more modern way, but it's fair to say that we don't have just one client. We are not a niche brand by any means.

Can you please everyone all the time?
No, but the customer who used to shop at Gucci wasn't coming any more. And fashion opinion leaders really want to buy into Gucci again because they are always looking for the next thing. So we need to maintain that level of fashion innovation – otherwise they'll simply replace Gucci with something else. But sometimes, when you tend to be less hot, that's when you start selling a lot. When you start reducing the impact on fashion's opinion leaders you impact broader consumers a lot more, and that's when the financial results can really explode.

Would you say that a company experiencing great sales but diminishing brand equity is more precarious than great brand equity and reduced financial results?
Normally, it is association work, meaning great brand equity with great sales. But you can also have a situation where brand equity goes down while sales keep going up because you can do marketing tricks, until at a certain point you realize that the brand equity will die and then the sales collapse. So it depends from brand to brand; I don't think there is a single answer. Generally, if the brand equity is high, then sales are high and profitability is high.

Similarly, would you agree with the common opinion that while ready-to-wear sales at brands like Gucci represent less than 20 percent of total revenue, they drive more than 80 percent of total brand equity? Is that naive to think or is that a reality?
I can't honestly tell you know how much brand equity is affected percentage-wise, but I do know that ready-to-wear certainly creates more loyal customers. Bags, for example, are quite different: people move from one bag to another, and from one brand to another. But when you get into ready-to-wear, you generally become a loyal customer to a brand like Gucci. So that is why we're happy with the changes we've made: we are getting back the clients that we lost, and the people buying now are younger.

You've been a fashion-company CEO in a period that has seen the fashion industry go from relatively niche to just that, a huge industry…
I'm a lucky guy!

Now this might seem like an absurd question to ask a CEO, but is there a time when big becomes *too* big? Will the luxury industry kill the very essence of rarefied luxury? Or can it continue to grow, to reach new consumers, new markets?
Not an easy question. I think that it's more a case of the [Kering] group needing to think in terms of a multi-brand strategy: some brands you keep niche; other brands can be the cash cow. But when you achieve €4 billion for Gucci – or €7 or 8 billion for Louis Vuitton – it is not feasible or thinkable to go back to €2 billion. It just doesn't make any sense. Similarly, there are certain brands that in my opinion cannot grow too much, because at a certain point they'll lose their exclusivity, their edge, their brand value, and they will collapse.

Can you give me an example of such a brand?
I cannot name names, even though of course I know which ones. The fact that today Kering is a big multi-brand group means we can really play with that, and at a group level give every single brand its own objective: milking the ones that are flying, resisting opening too many more stores for the jewel in the crown.

I wanted to address the debate surrounding the empowering of creativity within fashion. On one hand there is the belief that the brand should always be king, and within the brand there are movable pieces. Then there is another school of thought that says the designer – or rather, the creative director – has such power and influence that he or she can single-handedly drive both brand equity *and* commercial strategy. Where do you stand on all this?
The brand is king. The brand will survive any creative director or any CEO. So the brand is what we need to protect for the future. The battle for the creative director is huge because he is the

'It's easy to communicate to the store in Milan that we're changing, but you go to a store in a second-tier city in China and for them nothing's changed.'

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We're currently a few weeks away from Gucci publishing its 2015 results and it feels as though the fashion industry, media and financial analysts are looking to make up their minds – either this is a resounding success or it's a total failure – based on only a year's results. Is this current desire for immediacy at odds with a long-term strategy?
Firstly, I don't feel the pressure of the analysts. Some are amazing and I really respect them, but there are others I don't have a clue what they are going on about. The point is, do you put in place a strategy to please the analysts? Or because you want to stay in this industry for a long time and create added value for the brand? If you are settled as a company and you have the right position, then you need to grow and you need to make cosmetic

one interpreting the values of the brand in a specific scenario. He is adding his own value to that specific brand, but he cannot use just his own individuality to completely change the brand perception. So for me, a brand, by definition, needs to expand and survive the people, because when I leave, Gucci will still be there, when Alessandro leaves, Gucci will still be there. I think the healthy approach to adopt is, 'freedom within a framework'.

At Gucci yes, but not at other brands.
I am talking about how I see it. That was true when I was at Bottega and true at Stella, too. A good creative director is one who respects both the brand and the era. As far as I'm concerned, the creative director who changes the brand for his own ego is not a creative director.

because of its sheer scale?
Firstly, what has been done at Céline and Saint Laurent has been impressive, I have to say that. I don't think it is easy at any scale to change the positioning, the culture and the image of a brand. Of course, you have more possibility to do it quicker depending on your scale, not least because of the number of shops: if you have 50 shops it takes one year; if you have 500 shops it takes five years.

But do you think that the radical reinvention that has taken place at Saint Laurent is something that could be healthy within a brand of Gucci's scale?
We hear about healthy sales: it takes a little bit of time to reach healthy sales; it takes maybe 10 months. In terms of a change of position, it is not very different to what we are doing at Gucci. The real difference for me is the number of people and the number of shops involved. When you deal with 11,000 people at Gucci compared with however many people work at YSL, or 500 Gucci shops compared with 100, then things will take longer. As for the change in image, the show, the products and so on, Gucci has done this just as quick, but on a bigger scale. Keep in mind one important thing: over the past months Gucci has incorporated both the old collection and the new collection into its stores. Now, ideally the best thing we could have done was to just throw away all the old collection and present Alessandro's full new collection without any aesthetic compromise. But if I did that, not only would I get fired in two seconds, but the Gucci company would go from €4 billion to €1 billion. But that scenario could actually happen in a smaller company; you have the possibility of investing a bit of time and you can wait.

You have spoken before of the importance of hiring Jacopo Venturini from Valentino as Gucci's new head of merchandising. By empowering the creative director, does the commercial and merchandising director become almost the key position right now?
It is absolutely key. If you don't have the right person in that position you will not achieve the same results. He is the person linking business needs to product sensibility; he understands the customers and the markets, and is able to express this to a creative director who has a completely different sensibility, and they can work through any problems together to create a collection. Also, his character needs to be outstanding because he needs to deal with me, he needs to deal with Alessandro, and he is stuck in the middle when I am naturally pushing for one thing and Alessandro for something else. It is a very tricky position, and yes, he is absolutely key.

What are they then if they're not a creative director?
They are [pauses] artists. They go there and decide whatever they want without thinking about the brand, the CEO, the business, the people working there. The difference between an artist and a creative director is that the creative director understands how to translate the values of the brand in the world today. Otherwise you might as well be a painter and decide to paint a shirt, but it has nothing to do with the brand. That is not a creative director.

Compared to companies such as Céline, Saint Laurent and Loewe, which have obviously experienced similar creative reinvention and reinvigorated their brand equity, do you think that Gucci's scenario is different

'A good creative director is one who respects the brand and the era. The creative director who changes the brand for their own ego is not a creative director.'

What is the key to maintaining a healthy relationship between a CEO and creative director?
I think it lies in respecting each other's expertise and knowledge. I cannot substitute what the creative director does, and the creative director cannot do what I do. So they need to respect me and I respect them. Besides that, the CEO needs to understand how to put the creative director in the best position in order to succeed. No creative director can be truly creative if they are being screamed at, frightened, put in a corner, blamed, or being shown financial figures all the time. You provide them with the information they need, explain what the brand needs, and put them in the best possible position to create – and *they* have to understand that their work is not only to satisfy their own needs. They are not gods; I am not a god. So they need to understand when and how they need to be supported. Ultimately, the role of the CEO is to make sure that the creative director has the best conditions possible in which to be creative, while maintaining the best results.

Which of Alessandro's talents are you most impressed by?

Part Three
Friday, February 12, 2016
Gucci design studio, Rome

Alessandro Michele's office-cum-studio is, frankly, vast. And exquisitely proportioned. Occupying two rooms that were once the chapel of the sublime Roman *palazzo* originally purchased and restored by his predecessor, the space has now been transformed into Michele-land. More Persian carpets, more Napoleon III furniture, floor-to-ceiling antique screens adorned with geometric and pineapple prints, and a stuffed peacock or two (last seen skateboarding through a Berlin shopping mall in Gucci's Spring/Summer 2016 advertising campaign).

It's only been three weeks since we last saw one another, but one gets the distinct impression that in that time, Michele's probably conjured up more clothes, bags, shoes, images and store designs than most creative directors are required to do in an entire year. And for all the laidback persona, one Gucci insider suggests that Michele was already making key creative decisions and providing the vital link between design and supply chain long before he became creative director. Indeed, it was the fact that he was so well liked within the company *and* so efficient that fast-tracked him onto Bizzarri's wish list.

'Three weeks?' he ponders to himself, when I mention how long it's been since the menswear show. 'It feels like three years.'

Do you remember the first time that someone's style impressed you?

'The easiest thing we could have done was to throw away the old collection and sell only the new one. But if we did that, I'd have gotten fired in two seconds.'

Alessandro is a very free person; he doesn't put obstacles in his mind, so he is always receptive. He never says no; he'll always say, OK, let me think. The fact that he has this capability of not being closed in his own small cage makes him someone who is really able to see the world with different eyes.

Does he need protecting?
Of course. Frankly, I need to protect him from François-Henri sometimes; that's part of the game. It is too easy in a company to blame the people below you, but try blaming the people above you! That is different. So if someone comes and blames Alessandro for anything, they need to talk to me first and then I'll deal with it – but they'll be removed from the discussion. Always. That is my responsibility.

During the 1970s, when I was about seven years old, my auntie – my mother's twin – was quite big in the movie and television business here in Italy. She was a film editor, and a super stylish 1970s woman with big hair. Totally obsessed with fashion, she'd spend all her money on Chanel, furs, dresses and platform shoes. I was in love with her and I guess she introduced me to the idea that you could transform yourself through clothes; before we went out together, she'd always ask me, 'Lallo, would you prefer if I wore the blue or the red shoes?'

Was she like the eccentric version of your mother?
Yes, my mother was quite stylish, but more bourgeois. I remember her sister – her name was Giuliana – would say, 'Oh, why are you so sad? You must change your look'. And she'd take my mother off to her wardrobe and style her in colourful and eccentric ways before we had dinner. Giuliana was always laughing and I guess she impressed on me that dressing up could make you feel joyful and full of life.

What about you, when did you start to freely express yourself through clothes?
I started very young: my mother had a lot of problems with me. When I was about 13, I dyed my hair super blond and tried to pierce my own ears because I was in love with the Sex Pistols and Sid Vicious.

You were a DIY punk.
Yes, my mother was very worried every

time I'd go in the bathroom because within 30 minutes anything could happen. I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I was obsessed with music, so I probably felt more like a rock star than a fashion designer. I have to say that my first fashion inspiration came more through music than 1980s fashion gods like Giorgio Armani. At the time, but also now, music seems a more authentic way of expressing yourself through clothes than pure fashion.

Would you consider yourself a rebel?
Not really, although when I was younger my mother would always say 'For you, no means yes!' I mean, I am only a rebel in that I want to be free.

What played a role in shaping your ideas about beauty?
I think the history of art. Beauty is a lot of things, way beyond the rules of fashion: it could be a painting; it could be a carpet.

You've often referred to your love of the past. Is there a period in history that you find particularly inspiring?
I always have the Renaissance in my mind; it feels like a state of mind, and I love the idea that you could invent something and express yourself in such a free and crazy way. I mean, nothing compares to the Medici family and that explosion of decadence and beauty in Florence. New York in the late 1970s was tame in comparison.

Tell me about your rapport with your home town of Rome.
I think Rome really expresses the joy of life and love; it possesses a unique energy, even though it's almost impossible to live here! Rome hates me in a way and I hate her, because the city is like an old beautiful witch. But ultimately we love each other a lot and I cannot live without her.

How would you define the 'Italianness' of Gucci?
It is a big part of the brand. Gucci hasn't always been a fashion brand like Yves Saint Laurent, even though it's obviously become that. It was really born from the artisan and the culture of handcraft that is so much part of the Italian DNA. So at the heart of Gucci, you have Florence and the Renaissance and the idea of Italian beauty. This kind of chicness gets lost a bit in Italy and the Italian idea of sexiness, but I always say that I am from Rome and for me beauty is linked to symmetry: If you have a door, you have another one; if you have a window, there is another one. That is a core of Italian culture and I love it, even though I also love how Tom Ford changed the Gucci codes of beauty. Today, I am trying to open another door inside this language of beauty.

The Tom Ford era of Gucci expressed itself through hedonism and self-indulgence and sex. I was interested to know what your interpretation of those elements is at Gucci today.
Well, there are a lot of meanings to the word hedonism, you know. For example, the creation or affirmation of your personality as an individual. It feels like a return to the 1980s when things were centred around you as the individual, instead of the more 1990s feeling of the collective. I think that idea of self is something we need now because after 15 years of globalization people want to express themselves as individuals. I feel very close to Tom because I think that Tom was a pure expression of his time.

You obviously worked under Tom Ford at Gucci. What's your impression of that time?
Right now, I am trying to work on the Tom Ford room in the Gucci museum[2], trying to include every powerful piece from that time. I started with something like 20 pieces and now it's up to 75 pieces because everything is so stunning and so precise. Tom completely invented the idea that this bag company could be transformed into a fashion brand.

'When I was about 13, I dyed my hair super blond and tried to pierce my own ears because I was in love with the Sex Pistols and Sid Vicious.'

You've redefined Gucci within a set of aesthetic codes and moods, and it feels like your subsequent collections and shows have subtly refined this proposition. But I was wondering if you might ever wake up one day and think to yourself, 'Next season, I want the collection to be…'
All black!

Exactly. I mean, this feels like such a personal tableau of references and feelings, that I can't imagine such a radical reinvention of yourself.
Honestly, I don't have any rules. Everything is possible. My interpretation of Gucci is based on a patchwork of different things: my experiences in the brand, my personal aesthetic, my rapport with the Italianness of Gucci, and my obsession with the idea of decoration. It feels

like I'm diving into a big fresco from the Renaissance, but it's as much the renaissance of the East End of London or Elizabeth Street in New York as it is a purely Italian idea. I mean, I love to mix and match everything, that's what makes me who I am. I obviously put a lot of myself into the brand, but I know that I could probably change at some point in the future because I am the kind of person who has no rules.

Leonard Cohen once suggested that every artist owns one unique element, and no matter what the artist is creating, that unique element is always somehow present. Could you define your unique element?
As I just mentioned, I really love to mix and match different things: I don't want to be just one country; I don't only want to be punk rock; I need to be able to talk with more than one language. It just feels like I'm trying to put together different notes in music. And probably the second thing would be colour, and the power that colour possesses to affect a space or a person or the world around us. One day, I'd love to create a collection that is purely about colour.

Marco spoke about his desire to emphasize the sense of mutual respect within the working culture at Gucci, and to eliminate authority for authority's sake. What are your thoughts?
For me, this is about sharing energy. Sharing is the most beautiful thing in our lives. I share a lot with Marco, and he is happy when we talk and share our vision. Sometimes I am convinced about something and if I share it, it becomes 100 percent. If something happens in your life and you are not able to share the experience, it feels less special. Sometimes I think that if my parents were still alive, everything that's been happening to me would be different.

From a personal perspective, how have you experienced your transformation from somebody working behind the scenes at Gucci to the brand's public persona?
I mean, when I see myself in the press I almost feel like I'm looking at someone else. But the only difference that really counts is that I can now fully express everything I feel about the world, through my vision and my creativity. It feels like I'm a kid who's just been given a million toys to play with.

'I don't want to be just one country; I don't only want to be punk rock; I need to be able to talk with more than one language.'

Part Four
Wednesday, February 10
& Wednesday, March 2, 2016
Glen Luchford and
Christopher Simmonds

If Alessandro Michele's catwalk debut was a statement to the industry that Gucci was entering a wildly expressive new era, then his first advertising campaign (pre-Fall 2015) was a message to the world that the brand had changed aesthetic tack. As in, *completely* changed. Although the clothes featured in the imagery pre-dated his arrival as creative director, the mood, attitude, and presence of, yes, a Persian rug, were pure Alessandro Michele. Polish and shine were out; a twisted yet romantic realism seemed to be on its way in. Shot by British photographer Glen Luchford and art directed by fellow Brit Christopher Simmonds, the pictures signalled the start of an ongoing collaboration that has set the tone for all of Gucci's subsequent visual communications.

Over the seasons, these have become rich and complex tableaux, layering disparate elements and ensemble casts together in the same way that Michele does with his collections and catwalk shows. Where nature and the animal kingdom run wild over the clothes and accessories – printed bumblebees, snakes, tigers, flamingos, birds, petals, vines and fanciful flora – so they are then placed in resolutely urban settings such as the Los Angeles subway or on a Berlin rooftop, creating a jarring tension that underscores the experimental mood of the Gucci studio.

Glen Luchford: For me the crime of fashion is when people play safe in an industry where you don't need to be. I've been to a lot of fashion-campaign meetings over the years in which everyone sits around the table and discusses it in an advertising vernacular, like they're selling a car. But the minute you start strategizing and focusing on market research, you know you're fucked because the creative process is dead already – you may as well be selling a Ford. We've just been through 10 years of being boring and commercial in fashion advertising – 20 bags in one image, everything retouched to death and forced to the front of the frame, and all the campaigns just blur into one another. That's not the way forward, because nothing stands out. And if nothing stands out, then people won't stop and look at them. It's counterproductive. So I think that without knowing it Alessandro has kind of thumbed his nose to all that and said to himself, 'We can do whatever we want, as long as it sells, so let's get back to creating images in a much more organic way'.

How would you characterize Alessandro?
Glen: He is very Roman – open and sweet – and you immediately feel a sense of loyalty towards him because he has such an endearing manner. He's smart and intellectual, but not pretentious.

What did you think when Alessandro first shared his vision of Gucci with you?
Glen: I was shocked. And then I thought to myself, 'Well, when we get on set, we'll obviously have to rein it in'. But he actually went the other direction and the pictures became edgier, more exciting, more rewarding as we went along.

Is edgier always the right direction?
Glen: Well, in this instance I think it is. When you get someone like Alessandro who has a solid and coherent vision that he finds easy to articulate, you can really get behind that and push it.
Christopher Simmonds: For the first campaign, we did a few pictures and sent them over to Marco. It was so far removed from anything they had ever done before and I remember Glen, me and Alessandro sitting there nervously eating lunch, and thinking to myself, 'There's no way they're going to run this, we're all going to get fired before we've even got started'. And then Alessandro got a text from Marco, and he was like, he loves it! That installs such confidence and everybody wants to keep pushing it and pushing it and pushing it. In the end, it's the craziest things that Alessandro always goes for.

How does Alessandro's world and personality affect your own role at Gucci?
Christopher: Because Alessandro knows exactly what he wants to do, it makes everyone else's life a whole lot easier. Just before we started work on the campaign for his first collection, he sent us the most clearly articulated visual language document that I have ever seen in my life – and the campaigns are born out of this. Alessandro has it all mapped out in his mind. He'll bring out a book of really beautiful 18th-century art and furniture design, portraits, paintings of people holding books, fairy tales set in English gardens with rabbits running through them, and then say, 'This is my idea of pop culture'. It's rare, when you consider we are normally charged with making a facsimile of an old Newton or Bourdin image.
Glen: It's interesting to know that Alessandro's a big collector – art, furniture, jewellery, trinkets, all sorts – and I think he collects ideas and puts them together in exactly the same way. When you look at the collections, there are lots of different stories and ideas all jumbled in there and yet they are totally coherent. So from my perspective as a photographer, when you look at the outfit – birds of prey, pineapples all over the dresses and so on – as well as the girl, the hair and make-up, it all just works.

'The minute you start strategizing and focusing on market research, you know you're fucked because the creative process is dead already.'

Would you say it's taken a lot of courage for him to do what he's done at Gucci?
Christopher: I think it comes from a desire to do something different to everyone else. I think that because Gucci has given Alessandro the freedom to really go for it and express something that is strong and different and well articulated, that freedom to experiment trickles down to everyone around him. You sense that the design team have all been let off the leash. Everyone now feels like they are part of this big gang, working towards the same goal. It is so rare to be able to have that opportunity on a job of this scale and I think that Alessandro should be applauded for that.
Glen: He is courageous without knowing it. I've worked for lots of designers who spend so much time preoccupied with what the company wants, but Alessandro seems to have a nice way of navigating that, where he is able to have fun, be very creative and deliver for the company – which is rare for a corporation of Gucci's size. You know, if you were working for Balenciaga or McQueen or someone like that, they would accept that level of creativity, but for a huge corporation like Gucci, I don't know what their yearly turnover is… something like €1.6 billion?

…nearly €4 billion.
Glen Luchford: Just Gucci or the whole Group?

Just Gucci.
Glen: [sounding astonished] My God. So yes, normally there are a lot of restraints

and control and all the rest of it. But he has won the confidence of Marco and everybody else. It's a unique situation.

What's the general mood there?
Glen: Energized. Everyone seems to be really behind Alessandro: from the pattern cutters to the tailors to the tea lady to Marco. It's like playing for Man United when you've got a great team: everyone is excited to be on board, and you want to go and win everything.

Part Five
Friday, February 26, 2016
Gucci HQ, Milan

In the two weeks since last visiting Alessandro Michele in Rome, more significant events have taken place at Gucci (the feeling of blink-and-you'll-miss-it has never felt so palpable). On February 19, Kering published its last quarter and full year 2015 results, the highlight of which was Gucci's favourable turnaround, attributed to renewed vigour since Michele's creative overhaul. Company revenue in Q4 reached €1.1bn, 4.8 percent higher than the same quarter of 2014. Analysts had expected an increase of 1.5 percent.

On the same day, François-Henri Pinault took the opportunity to release a statement concerning Kering's views on the emerging 'see-now, buy-now' culture of brands such as Burberry, which is planning to consolidate its shows and make collections available for purchase immediately afterwards. 'It negates the dream' of luxury, said Pinault, adding that the traditional six-month period between show time and arrival in stores 'creates desire'.

As if to illustrate Pinault's point, on February 24, Michele delivered arguably his strongest, most assured and commercially satisfying collection to date. With a total of 70 looks, the effect was an extraordinary *mélange* of characters, colours, layers, fabrics and silhouettes; mens- and womenswear blurred through proportion and cut; some looks sportier, others chicer; always dressy; and even an all-black, double-breasted women's suit. It felt like the fashion equivalent of channel hopping through YouTube. Which is why Michele's Gucci reflects the mash-up culture of our times, in which style and music tribes have interlocked, merging into an ensemble of individual parts. Not so much a gang of four, more a gang of 40. Or 70, in this instance.

Having left the dust to settle for a couple of days after the show, now seems like the fitting time to bring Alessandro and Marco together for a final chat. It's fascinating to see how they interact in one another's company: Alessandro is visibly more relaxed and confident, more expressive and gesticulative; Marco naturally adopts the role of the protector, his Italian alpha-male-ness more pronounced. To see this played out in the confines of Alessandro's kooky office feels like a dress rehearsal in a particularly refined theatre set. And for the last time, it's time to quiz them about one other, and the colourful world they inhabit at the head of Gucci.

It's clear that this season is being defined by the debate surrounding the role of the fashion show itself. In light of François-Henri Pinault's comments, what are your own thoughts about how Gucci will present its collections moving forward?
Alessandro: From my point of view, I love fashion shows: they're the moment when you can give soul to the clothes. Otherwise, it is just a skirt. Fashion is about the dream and without the dream fashion doesn't exist anymore. So I believe more and more in the fashion show, and I think that fashion needs to be more fashionable than ever before. Over the past few years we've talked a lot about products, but fashion is also about giving you the dream and a vision. I mean, how can I give you the vision without the show?
Marco: They are called shows for a reason, exactly as Alessandro was saying. The show for me is the pinnacle of creativity. How could I ask a talented creative director like Alessandro to do a show and present it after six months? It makes no sense. Moving forward, if you want to stay away from fast fashion, I think personally we need to go in a completely opposite direction with what is being talked about. Of course, I am not judging anybody; everybody is free to make their own goals and decisions. But from what I see, there is a lot of marketing talk, and everybody is questioning everything. And I think it's just creating a lot of mess for the consumer, which isn't going to benefit the industry.

From a CEO perspective, how important is the show?
Marco: From a branding standpoint, the show represents only a *tiny* part of our business, and the impact you actually have on the consumer is super, super tiny. I mean, what about the pre-collection? That is just as important as the show. So let us use the show to tell a story, and then if we need to do something to be closer to the consumer, let's make sure that the shops today are no longer these mausoleums where you are afraid to enter. We need to create an atmosphere in the shop where there is energy, passion, smiles, where it is joyful and colourful, where you want to actually enter the shop.

How do you feel about the customer wanting immediacy in the shopping experience?
Marco: I don't think the customer today really cares about having 'see-now, buy-now'. If they want that they can do it every single week with fast fashion. Have we *actually* asked the customer if they want to have something available after the show? You hear that three bags are going to be released tomorrow in five shops, so you produce 15 bags. How many customers are you going to satisfy with that? 15! What are they talking about? I think that after the show the thing we should be concentrating on most is making sure that this product is going to be produced perfectly, or even better than the one that was presented in the show. And I think that the customer is more than happy to wait for the period of time required by the supply chain to create that beautiful product. So never will the CEO or creative director of Gucci go that way; as a luxury brand we should be going in the opposite direction! Now, perhaps another question we should ask ourselves is: should we or should we not present menswear and womenswear together? From Alessandro's very first show, the new wave of Gucci's aesthetic was very much about blending the genders. So do we really need two shows? That is in more doubt.
Alessandro: I totally agree with Marco. It is impossible to do this with our collections because the quality level of the pieces – every single piece of embroidery, every single bag and lining – is so high. If you want something for tomorrow, the product becomes nothing.
Marco: Again, the way I think that we should focus as an industry on getting closer to the consumer is at the point of sale. We talk a lot about the customer, but the reality is, if you go into most fashion stores today, the products are hidden away from the customer. I mean, you try to enter and there is a security guard staring at you! This is exactly what we *didn't* do with the shop in Via Montenapoleone, conceived by Alessandro. We looked to really connect with the customer: you go in the store and you want to touch things…
Alessandro: It is like an old department store; you are very close to the product.
Marco: This brings us to the part that I'd discussed with you before: the education of the Gucci shop staff. These people need to be warm, knowledgeable, happy to talk to you and connect with you. That of course is the biggest challenge that we have today, because managing the Via Montenapoleone shop, which is 500 metres from here, is easy, but the shop in Sydney is going to take a little bit longer.

How do you educate the people who work in the stores?
Marco Bizzarri: It is very, very difficult; there isn't one single answer. For these people, it is a change in mentality, and a cultural change, that is the most difficult thing. Across the world, with 11,000 people working for Gucci, we have very different people, from different cultures and with different experiences. So the only way this would work was for me to go and see all of them, and say, 'I tell you what we want to do, you see me, this is the leadership style. I respect people; I don't want to be harassing people; I don't want to fire anybody. But if you are not comfortable with this new idea of respect and warmth, then it is better if you leave. There are lots of other companies. Why stay at Gucci?'

We've talked before about the cohabitation of Alessandro's collections with those from Frida Giannini. How long will this phasing out period take to complete?
Marco: For Alessandro's collection to be fully in the shops is going to take at least two years. As I've mentioned to you before, we couldn't afford to take out all the old collection, so we need to phase in and phase out properly. Still now, we have 50 to 55 percent of the collections from the previous creative director. They clash with each other because they are so different, but we agreed to compromise like that to maintain a level of business. I need to do my job, then in two years' time we will have Alessandro's collections and the business will boom.

'Everyone's behind Alessandro: from the pattern cutters to the tea lady to Marco. It's like playing for Man United when you've got a great team.'

'I don't think customers today really care about having see-now, buy-now. If they want that they can do it every single week with fast fashion.'

Alessandro, how do you feel about this cohabitation from a creative perspective?
Alessandro: From the creative point of view, if you create a collection, you need a box in which to present it, and you need everything in that box to be perfect. Because if you put my dresses and my collection in the wrong space they just won't work, so I really appreciate that Marco pushed to change the stores so quickly, especially Via Montenapoleone.
Marco: We took a risk with Montenapoleone. Of course, being in Milan, it is the flagship of the brand, so we decided to make this big investment, but we didn't have the contract signed for this space; it is actually going to expire two years from now. I don't have the contract signed yet, meaning that if tomorrow the landlord says, 'No Marco, I prefer to have someone else in there', then we need to leave and write off all the investment. But we took the risk in order to communicate this message in Milan as quickly as possible. Now, every single day we are doing plus 100 percent at the shop, so that helps.

Marco, in one of my conversations with Alessandro, I asked him whether he considered himself to be rebellious as a child. What about you?
Marco: No, I was the most homogeneous boy of my generation. I only became rebellious later on in life!

Do you acknowledge that taking risks was always part of your character?
Marco: Always. Making choices for work, choices for life, always, and I am super impatient – I get bored two seconds after I start things.

When I interviewed Yves Carcelle[3], he said that he was a natural born entrepreneur, already selling marbles at school. What about you?
Marco: No, I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do. Even now I don't know if being a CEO is exactly what I want to do! Planning to become something was never in my thoughts, it just happened. It was something that I liked more than other things in my careers, but certain decisions brought me here, and much by chance. I mean, most people prefer to have something stable, but I like being able to move. I just realized over the years that I was very good at working with people. I think I understand people a lot. For me, that is the basis of everything.

Are there strategic decisions that you have made in the last 18 months that with hindsight, you might have done differently had you had the luxury of more time?
Marco Bizzarri: I will never look back. I will never say if I'd had more time, because this is life. Luckily I met Alessandro, luckily he took the job, luckily we have fun. Often you can have a super success, going forward and whatever, but the point is we have a lot of fun, people like to work with us. Gucci has once again become a brand that is often at the top of the market in terms of fashion. It is working well. Could I have made different choices? Of course. But am I happy with those choices I made? Yes! Absolutely.
Alessandro: The other day, the Italian press was asking me about Marco, and I said that I think he has an extraordinary talent. And the first sign of his talent was when he put his faith in me, because if I was him a year ago, I would never have chosen me for this job! [Laughs]

In the collection notes from Wednesday's show, there was a phrase, 'Each dress portrays very different sign systems…' There were 70 different looks and it felt like you were broadening the Gucci fashion proposition, allowing more people to discover pieces that relate to their individual identity or lifestyle.
Alessandro: Yes, because it is about thinking about where the world is going. I can spend a few hours on the Internet and find 100 different things, because the world is obviously not one-dimensional. I want to be free to choose many different aesthetics. Of course, I have set ideas but within the framing of these ideas I want to try many different expressions. I want to be honest with people, and what I think is exactly what I choose to show. If I think of a flower motif, then why can I not also play with geometry in the same collection? It just depends if there is harmony or an aesthetic idea around this.

Marco, you'd mentioned to me before that one of your responsibilities is to protect Alessandro, to allow him to work in the most harmonious environment. Do you feel that creative directors need to be protected from the industry itself?
Marco: I knew Alessandro was the right person for this job, and protecting him was more a case of letting him grow in

'Even now I don't know if being a CEO is exactly what I want to do! Planning to become something was never in my thoughts, it just happened.'

confidence and become the creative director that he is now. The first quarter of 2015 was bad for us: down seven or eight percent. But how many of Alessandro's products were in the shops? Zero. And this journalist said the new change in Gucci was not performing. What were they talking about? So I needed to make sure that Alessandro was left in peace and not feeling pressurized at all by these outside forces. The more he's grown in confidence, the more you see the growth in expression, from show to show and from collection to collection. Maybe he should be the one protecting me! Ultimately, we've seen that this industry is, to a certain extent, a stupid industry: it can burn people's talent out after just five or six months, because there is no patience to allow people to grow.

make decisions feels right for now. If I'm happy doing something and Marco likes it, then we are both happy. The happier we become, the more love there is, no?

Marco: I believe a lot in that, and you cannot put limits or constraints on creativity. All the changes in the shop were Alessandro's responsibility; all the images are his vision right up to the end. On the other hand, if he has doubts, you need to be completely supportive and empower him. Why would you not? I remember the first time he showed me the collection looks – you know, he was really pushing the limits of the Gucci aesthetics – and I could sense he was quite nervous and tired. He presented the looks to me and he asked me which ones I preferred…

Alessandro: He ended up picking out the most complicated looks! And I was thinking, 'Oh my God!' Once he'd left the room, I was talking with one of the guys from the design team, and I said, 'This is an odd CEO, he's just selected the most complicated, quirkiest and craziest looks'. But, if I didn't have a person like Marco, nothing would have been possible, nothing.

creative individual is able to construct a full picture in his head, and this can touch *anything* within the branding of a huge company like Gucci. I've come to understand that for Alessandro all the different touchpoints make perfect sense; most people cannot see this at the beginning, but gradually you see that he was right all along, through his overall vision. And when you see that come together, it is stunning.

Lastly, against the current industry backdrop of uncertainty and confusion, the one thing I've sensed over these past few weeks is that you both seem to be enjoying yourselves.

Alessandro: Yes, a lot.

Marco: A lot. Without that enjoyment you wouldn't have seen the collections that Alessandro is creating, and secondly you wouldn't be able feel the energy that we have put in the company today. I think the reason the two of us get along so well is because we are very similar. We both respect people; we both love to talk and to create together; and we're both very easy-going. As I think I've made clear to you throughout our conversations, for Alessandro to have such a great talent and to also be so humble is why I wanted to work with him. When I started here I set out to create a culture at Gucci of respect and the support of creativity.

'We've seen that this industry is stupid: it can burn people's talent out after just six months, because there is no patience to allow people to grow.'

There seems to be so much debate in the industry right now, and it all seems to be quite negative and unhealthy. As the heads of one of the biggest luxury fashion houses in the world, how does it feel to hear these things?

Marco: Listen, everyone is free to do or say whatever they want, but I think everyone should just focus on achieving the best creativity, the best product, the best quality. All the rest is statements and gossip. I mean, if you want to change something, don't talk about it, just do it. And do it now.

Alessandro: The best thing you can do is just keep moving and changing. There have been moments here when I've hesitated about making a decision and when I call Marco to discuss it, he'll always says, 'You have to do it, and you have to do it now'. That sense of freedom to

You have worked with a lot of different creative people, Marco. What would you say sets creatives apart from yourself, even though you do a lot of creative business thinking?

Marco: I have always been touched by the emotional side of creativity; you can sense the love for the work in the eyes of creative people. That doesn't mean I don't care, but I appreciate it a bit less than them. The great

You both seem like ambassadors for this.

Marco: If we weren't, it wouldn't work. Alessandro and I, we walk, we smile, we say hello to everybody, we enjoy ourselves. It will take a little time for

this new behaviour and mood to take effect, but everybody here at Gucci will eventually mirror it, and the ones that don't will not find their place in this new culture. Life moves quicker than ever before, and we all have to move with it.

Only time will tell how Gucci, Bizzarri and Michele will fare. Naysayers will perhaps question the long-term prospects of a global luxury fashion brand anchored in 'vintage chic'. That said, Hedi Slimane's remarkable commercial success during his four-year reign at Saint Laurent was anchored in the same premise: updating and 'luxing up' thrift-store finds, sold through the prism of the heavily branded experience.

One ex-Gucci insider highlighted the notion of 'generational fashion': the fact that Tom Ford's fully formed vision for the brand in 1994 took 20 years – an entire consumer generation – to finally play itself out of fashion (although the skinny tailoring and rock'n'roll vernacular that Slimane introduced at the turn of the millennium – arguably the biggest trend since Ford's Gucci – isn't showing any signs of slowing down). Will Michele's Gucci become a 'thing' for the foreseeable future? Or can he evolve significantly and take the brand with him? Will the commercial boom that Bizzarri predicts will hit in two year's time – once Michele's work hits the entire Gucci retail network – trigger a broader consumer wave of desirability? Or will society simply move on to other fashion trends, other interests, other causes, in the ephemeral way of music or YouTube phenomena? And will Bizzarri be able to protect Michele when he's faced with the inevitable backlash that comes from fashion's fickle opinion leaders?

It's all as uncertain or as perfectly self-assured as the fashion industry itself. It simply depends on who you want to believe.

One thing, though, that is without question, and that so desperately needs to be championed in our current moment, is that, alongside the empowerment and creative freedom, the coherent strategy and creative/commercial alignment, Bizzarri and Michele also seem to be doing that least fashionable of things – having fun.

1. The Gucci flagship store on Via Montenapoleone in Milan was redesigned by Alessandro Michele to create an atmosphere of 'discretion' and 'understated drama'. It reopened in September 2015.

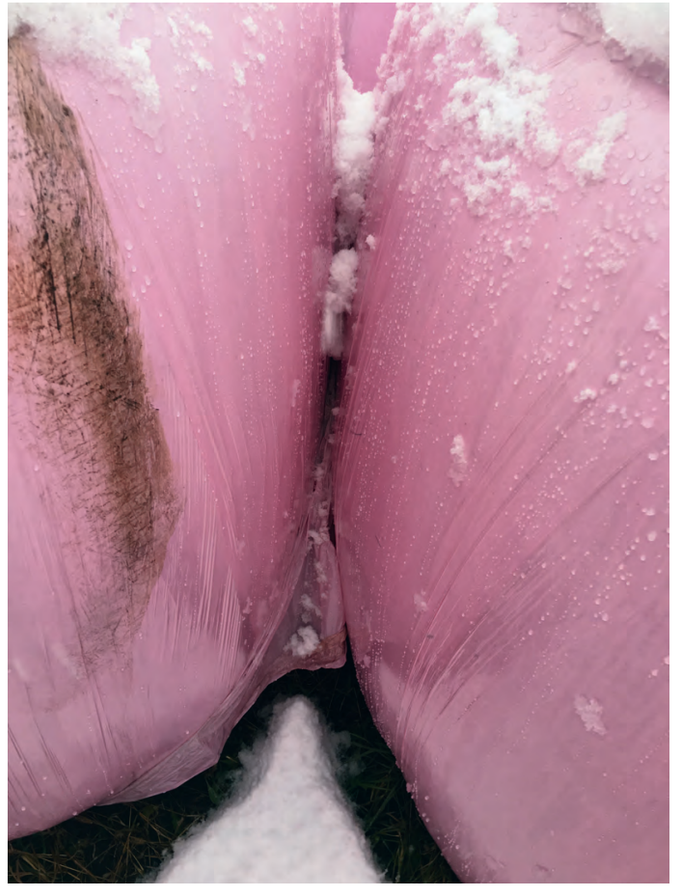
2. Gucci Museo, housed in a 14th-century building in Piazza della Signora in Florence, tells the story of the label from its beginnings as an artisan leather-goods firm to its current incarnation.

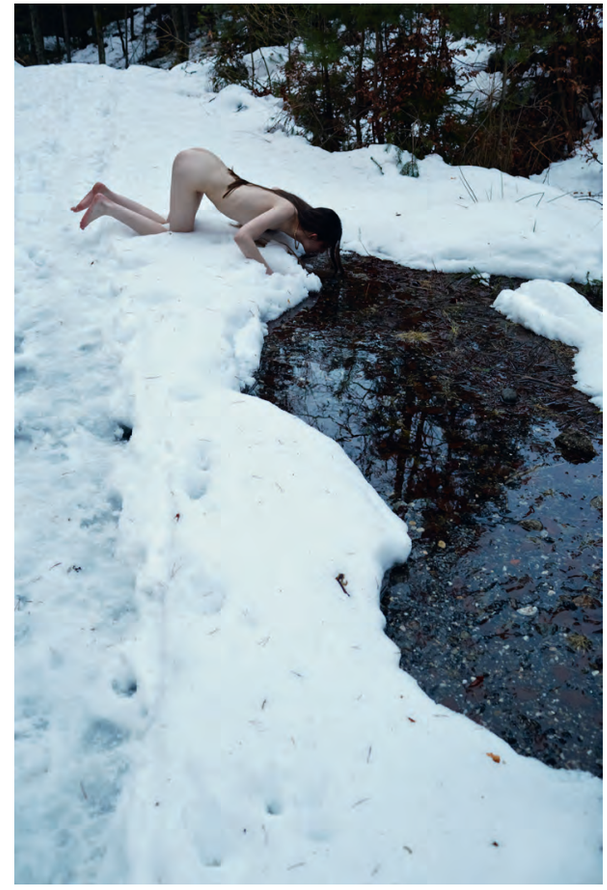
3. Yves Carcelle, who passed away in 2014, was CEO of Louis Vuitton from 1990 to 2012, overseeing its rise to becoming one of the world's most valuable luxury brands.

IA and the bear

Gucci Pre-Fall 2016

Photographs by Juergen Teller
Styling by Lotta Volkova





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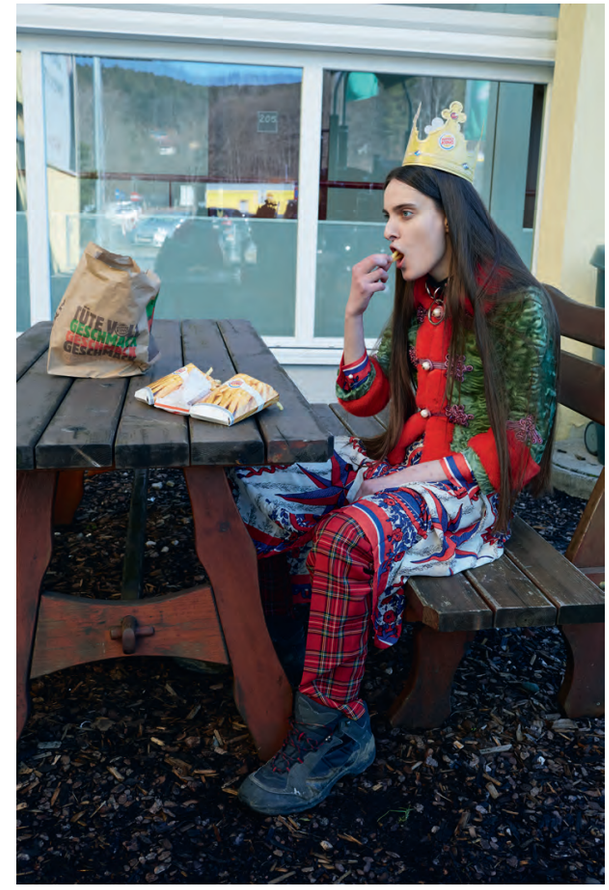

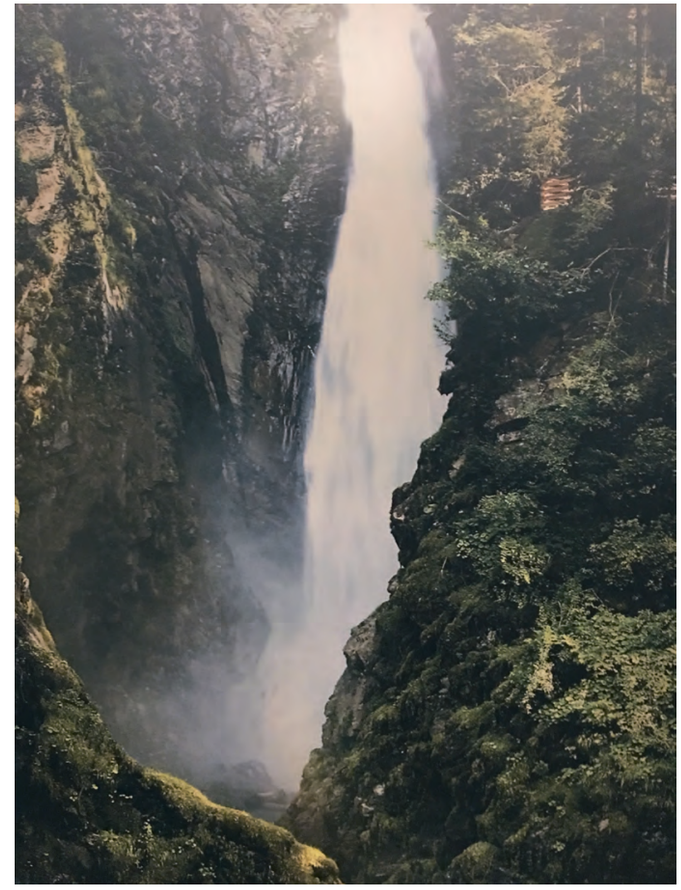

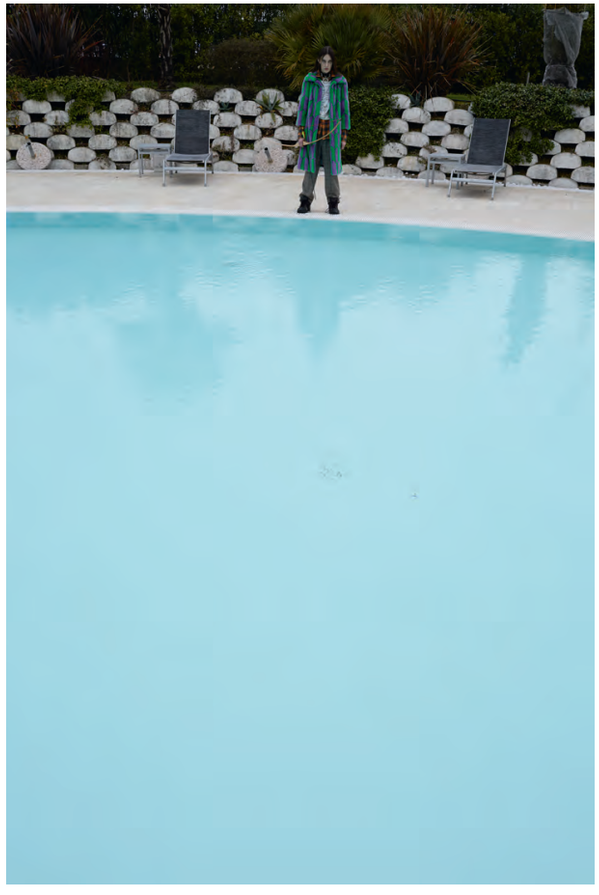

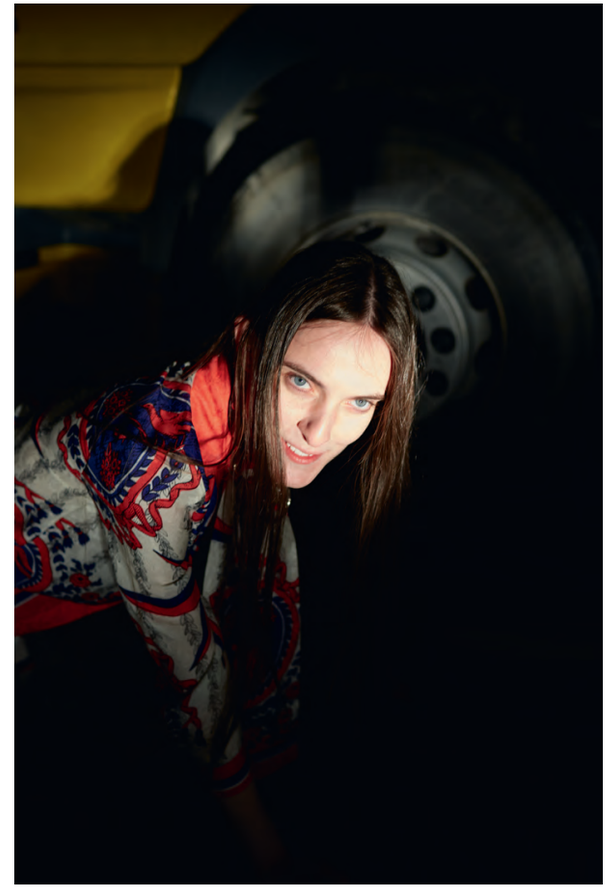

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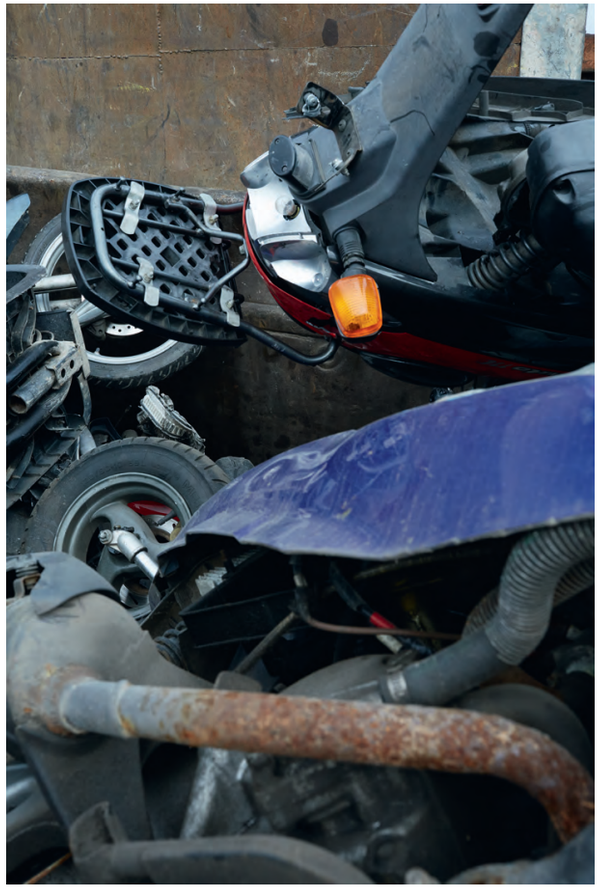

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The big ban

Even the fashion press must comply in the People's Republic. By Hung Huang. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

The Chinese government is bipolar. On March 2, in a landmark United Nations resolution, it voted for new sanctions against its long-time ally North Korea. But then, just eight days later, on March 10, it introduced new media laws that would make Kim Jong-un proud: the Director of State Administration for Press, Publications, Broadcasting, Television and Film (SAPPBTF) issued a single-page document that effectively banned all foreign and joint-venture media from publishing or distributing digital content, including 'texts, maps, art, games, animations and videos'. (The edict, signed in red, obviously immediately went viral.)

The state already controls the Chinese media either directly or through self-censorship, and back in August 2014, it cracked down on bloggers using popular Chinese social-media sites such as WeChat. By banning the use of pseudonyms, demanding users follow seven rules and pass a test to have the right to publish – a bit like a bloggers' driving license – the government said it was acting to stop people 'damaging other people's rights and interests and public security in the name of freedom of speech'. This, it said was, 'true freedom of speech'.

Until now the Chinese government has generally dealt with the foreign media as might a stern teacher with naughty children: publish an unpalatable article and your site will receive a slap on the wrist and be blocked for a few days. Of course, news organizations, such as the *Financial Times China* and the *Wall Street Journal China*, have always known that the government might intervene, particularly since 2012 when it did, banning the *New York Times*' website and social-media accounts for publishing stories about the assets of former premier Wen Jiabo and his family (then worth $2.7 billion, according to the newspaper). But until now this treatment was more or less restricted to major news players; the Chinese government has never taken much notice of the fashion media.

So the ban, and its unrestricted nature, came as a surprise to fashion-media powerhouses such as Hearst and Condé Nast, leaving them dumbfounded and confused. Both companies have spent 20 years investing heavily in the development of their digital presence in China, while majorly wooing both SAPPBTF and the General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP) agency to protect their business interests. All on the understanding that as long as they stayed away from politics, they would be left alone in China to make their millions.

That said, the fashion media have experienced their fair share of adversity in China. A year after *Vogue* was launched in the country, its editorial office was forced to move from Shanghai to Beijing due to some small technicality in Chinese regulations. The rumour at the time was that a rival had actually reported *Vogue*'s violation to the authorities. On another occasion, *L'Officiel Chine* was banned for three months for featuring a celebrity in a pair of trousers that supposedly looked like the Japanese flag. That time it was said that a competitor had written a letter claiming the publication was 'unpatriotic'.

As for the why of the most recent ban, brought in despite foreign-media outlets being only tiny players in the Chinese market, there are various theories, the most obvious being the government's renewed desire to clamp down on the possibility of *any* kind of dissent. Right before the total ban came into effect, for example, Ren Zhiqiang, a real-estate tycoon and Communist Party member with 37 million online followers, was taken offline for reportedly saying that China's news media must represent and serve the public's interest, not just those of the party. Zhiqiang then became the victim of a barrage of attacks and insults in all official media mouthpieces that questioned his loyalty to the party and dubbed him a rabid dog.

Another theory is that the ban is more devious and was designed by political opponents of Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party in China, to ensure the foreign press hate Xi's guts. Since he came to power almost four years ago, Xi has been known for his hard-line policy towards state media, which he believes should be Communist Party mouthpieces.

As of mid-March, none of the foreign-press websites have in fact been shut down, so the ban might simply have been a timely reminder to the media of the Chinese government's preferred methods – fear and intimidation. Stay in line, it says, or we will come for you. It's a threat guaranteed to give the foreign media sleepless nights, while ensuring that, no matter how long they have been in the country or how much they have invested, they never forget that they exist but for the grace of the Communist Party.

Optimism as rebellion

How seeing the glass half full can be a radical viewpoint. By Matthew Stone. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

Optimism can come and go in all spheres of our lives, much as widely felt waves of it can pass in and out of cultural relevancy. In 2004 I co-wrote a manifesto about it with curator Brianna Toth, which we called *Optimism as Cultural Rebellion*. It did not specify what one might be optimistic about, instead stating solemnly that, 'What should not be forgotten is that optimism allows for positive, energetic transformation and should not be feared'. At that time, as a recently graduated 22-year-old, it felt urgent and transgressive to propose the adoption of optimism as a neglected, yet crucial intellectual position. Other artists were discussing notions of 'utopia' that seemed connected to what I was thinking, but, in contrast to my earnest efforts, seemed to be cynically toying with the idea to highlight a perceived danger present in all forms of idealism. In response, I wrote, 'Although it is potentially dangerous to extol ideologies, it is surely valuable to be idealistic'. I was arguing for a superfluid sense of idealism that did not have singular fixed goals and which might therefore avoid the totalitarianism of rigid ideologies that they seemed to fear.

In March 2008, I initiated a project entitled *Interconnected Echoes*, a year-long series of weekly salons. I sat in the same place every Saturday afternoon at 3pm and invited people with whom I had started conversations in nightclubs to come and discuss various subjects. We worked on finding critical definitions for an optimism that could be believed in and started to unpick its problematic nature. I had long rejected the idea of blind optimism, defining my own as active and 'the vital force that entangles itself with and then shapes the future'. From our discussions the idea arose that without acknowledging the difficulties of the world, optimism might have to be defined as 'triumph over suffering'. I now think of this 'vital force' as amoral in nature and recognize that the power of optimism can be applied to anything. In 2005, David Cameron, now British prime minister, spoke of his desire to be a voice of 'change, optimism and hope', while during Obama's first presidential election campaign in 2008 the word 'hope' became the iconic visual foothold of his rise to power.

My desire to find meaning in optimism has always been part of innocently looking for ways towards a better world. Perhaps it's just that I am older and less naive, but the current political landscape, mediated by the Internet, seems to have raised the general awareness of global politics. Looming environmental disaster, the movement of refugees and the killing of African-Americans by US police, the last highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement, have all triggered a shift in my own readiness to discuss optimism's importance. Optimistic thought without action will not fix broken systems. In fact, pitching optimism as the primary means of self-actualization for those facing genuine adversity can be a patronizing tool of oppression. By-your-bootstraps philosophies tacitly reassert the toxic idea that inequality arises from the attitudes of those who are oppressed rather than the systemic violence enacted upon them. So with this in mind, is there still place for a critical understanding of, or commitment to, the importance of optimism as a tool for positive change? Given the opportunities the powerful have, aren't they the most likely to feel optimistic? After all, to some degree, optimism is a privilege and how easily one feels it is often limited by the very same situations that might most demand its transformative potential. Over time I have learned from personal experience that it is sometimes very difficult to feel optimistic: if life is tough it is usually harder to feel optimistic about changing it.

I used to think that proposing optimism was culturally rebellious; I have come to understand it to be politically sensitive. Yet even now I still see its power to affect all types of change as undeniable. I can accept that pessimists may predict the future with more accuracy, while still believing that it is optimists who create it. I don't think it's realistic to expect those who dominate to stop feeling optimistic about maintaining the status quo. Which leaves us with a continuing challenge: how do we find new ways to get optimism to those having the hardest time feeling it?

Lipstick feminism

Why 21st-century feminists are replacing hunger strikes with high heels. By Laia Garcia. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

One of the first steps to becoming a good feminist is to loudly proclaim a disinterest in fashion. I already knew this, but I learned it again two weeks after we launched Lenny, Lena Dunham's feminist newsletter, back in July 2015. We posted a selfie Lena had taken on our Instagram account, a close-up of her face wearing a beautiful shade of red lipstick, which I described on the caption as 'powerful'. 'I thought this was a feminist newsletter?' rang the first comment. 'Disappointing to see such vacuous stuff featured,' someone else chimed in. The jury had reached a verdict and it told us we could not be politically conscious while having our faces painted. Whatever happened to sisterhood? Do these women not know how hard it is to find the right shade of red lipstick? Not that I was surprised.

Fashion is frivolous. Fashion takes advantage of women's vulnerabilities. Fashion is expensive and therefore not meant for 'real life'. Fashion makes women unhealthy. And listen, I'm not saying that the fashion industry is perfect, but so many of these opinions are products of the patriarchy itself. (*Patriarchy*: once upon a time I would have thought it ridiculous to even say that word out loud, and while I still do, I'm nothing if not self-aware.) Fashion is 'women's interest', so it must be *less than,* even though throughout the development of Western civilization, men's costume was often as ornate – sometimes more so – than women's. In the early 1800s when men decided they needn't concern themselves with such superficial matters, the dandy emerged. Nearly two centuries later Jean Baudrillard called dandyism 'an aesthetic form of nihilism,' and then 35 years later I read that quote and realized it's not an unrealistic way to describe what being a feminist with a keen interest in fashion feels like.

A few years ago, before Beyoncé performed in front of a giant sign that read 'FEMINIST', my friend Tavi Gevinson started Rookie, a feminist website for teenage girls. At the time many people did not take her endeavours seriously. They were already sceptical about her interest in fashion, and they did not think someone so young could be so smart, so committed to creating a space for young girls to just *be*. One of my favourite things I did while at Rookie was an editorial featuring the artist India Salvor Menuez wandering around a Chinatown mall wearing Mary Katrantzou, photographed by my friend Petra Collins. Petra, whose work has been part of Rookie since the beginning, is now at the centre of a new wave of female photographers whose work is explicitly anti-fashion, not in a 1990s heroin-chic way, but in a way that rejects the glamour, super-vixen, hyper-sexualized tropes that come from decades of seeing women through the eyes of male photographers. That women like Willow Smith and Rowan Blanchard are on the cover of fashion magazines surely owes a bit of debt to Rookie and the world that Tavi dreamed of, and made a reality.

But now feminism is fashion's navy blue of India! 'Can you wear lingerie and still be a feminist?' asks one article. 'Are high heels feminist?' asks another, as if inanimate objects can have an opinion or an influence in the fight for the equality of all humans. We have conversations about the lack of racial diversity in fashion, about the need for a variety of body types – of healthy body types – on runways and in magazines. But then Karl Lagerfeld stages a 'feminist protest' on the runway at Chanel one season ('Was Coco Chanel a feminist?'); Demna Gvasalia sends out two different collections with an all-white cast of models and is deemed 'the saviour of fashion'; and designers churn out unisex clothing that they now call 'genderless', as if a knitted sweater and matching trousers will make trans people's lives better.

'At least we're having these conversations!' some say, in the same tone they might use to tell their child who placed last in the school race, 'At least you gave it your best!' But it's just not enough. 'Put out or get out!' If a teenage girl from a Chicago suburb was able to visibly change the landscape, then truly what excuse does a powerful corporation have? Attempt to understand the problems and find real solutions for them, or at least own up to the fact that the world is changing and you're just coming along for the ride. Yes, these are important conversations, but talking about the same thing all the time without doing anything about it is just really boring.

Merry England

By Katie Hillier & Luella Bartley

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‘Balance. The mix, the contrast, the extremes,
The peace and the rebellion:
Merry England.’

Katie Hillier, Luella Bartley
Hillier Bartley

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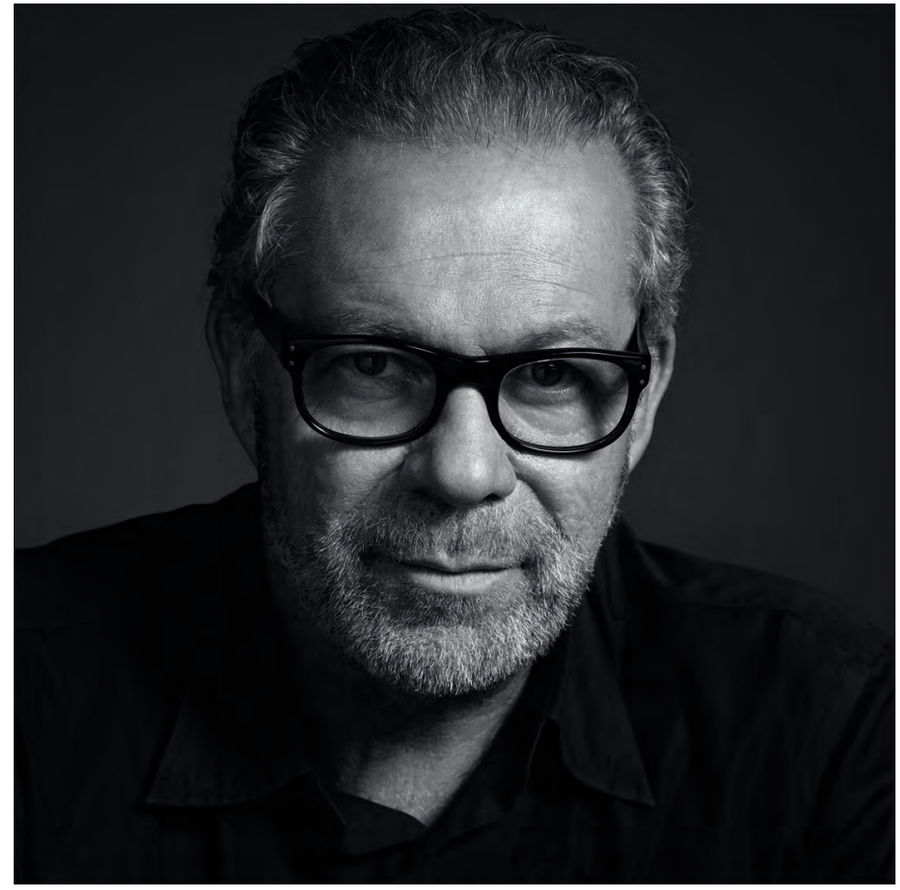
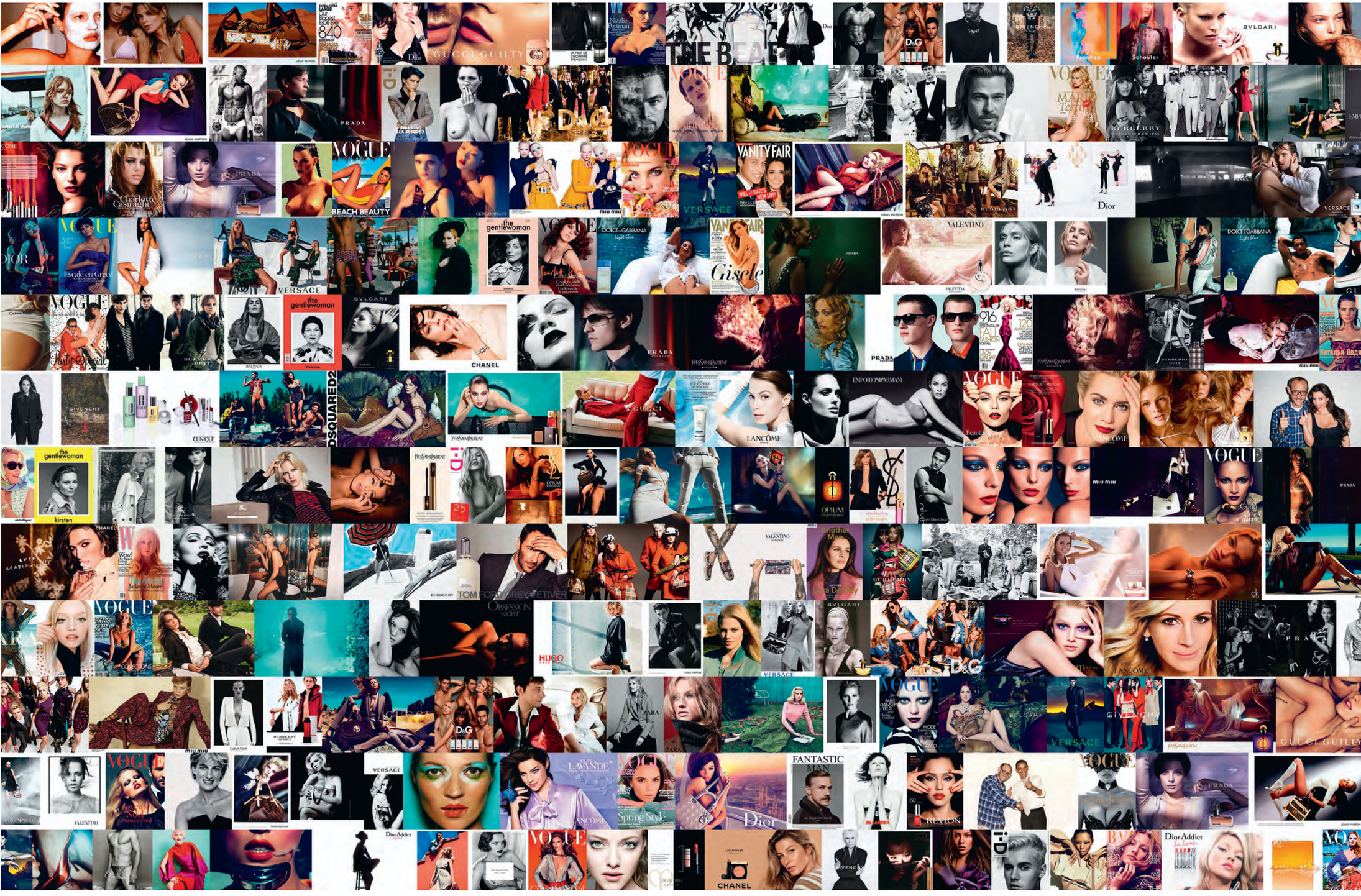
‘I live 100% for the deal.’

Giovanni Testino, the founder of Art Partner, finally speaks.

By Thomas Lenthal
Portrait by Mario Sorrenti

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TOM FORD GREY VETIVER
HUGO
ZARA
FANTASTIC MAN
REVLON
Spring Style
Dior Addict

‘Mario told me that if I could do so well as a shipping agent, I’d be an amazing photography agent too. The next morning we decided to work together.’

‘I’m Latin,’ says Giovanni Testino, ‘we do things more by instinct.’ That intuition, combined with Peruvian-born Testino’s competitive streak, has seen his company, Art Partner, become perhaps the world’s leading management agency for fashion creatives. Co-founded with his photographer brother Mario Testino in 1992, the agency works globally representing the cream of the world’s photographers (including Mario, Mert Alas & Marcus Piggott, Alasdair McLellan, Mario Sorrenti, Steven Klein and Glen Luchford), stylists (Joe McKenna, Camilla Nickerson, Melanie Ward and Marie Chaix), and make-up artists and hair stylists (Charlotte Tilbury, Didier Malige, Anthony Turner, and Lucia Pica). In other words, it’s no accident that Testino’s clients work on over 1,000 jobs a year with the world’s most prestigious brands and magazines.

There are agents who revel in the public eye and others, like Giovanni, who shy away from it, preferring to remain out of sight, conjuring backroom deals. After 24 years in the business, Giovanni has granted *System* his first ever interview, taking the opportunity to discuss the revolution of social media, how to keep your artists relevant, and why running a photo agency is like a soap opera.

Let’s start by talking about your professional life prior to Art Partner and working in fashion.

Giovanni Testino: I studied economics in California and then went back to Peru and started working in shipping in the early 1980s. After visiting various shipping representatives around the world, I brokered a really innovative deal chartering ships that came into Nicaragua with Russian freight, went back empty to the Black Sea, where we then filled them with ores and concentrates, and sent them on to Europe. It was in the middle of the Cold War, an interesting time to be in that business, and I rose in my shipping career really quickly.

Why did you quit shipping to become a photo agent and establish Art Partner?

It was my brother Mario’s idea! At one point, because cellphones were not really around and we were not living in the same place, we had not been in touch for a while. Then we bumped into each other by chance at a party in Los Angeles at Flaming Colossus[1]. We danced all night and then we started talking about work. My brother told me that if I could do so well as an agent of ships, I could be an amazing photography agent. That next morning we decided to work together and Mario managed to convince Yasuko Austin[2], then owner of LA-based location company Legend Inc., to become our initial backer. He told her that his brother would create the most successful photography agency. Mario is pretty persuasive and she agreed! Soon after, I moved and opened our first office in New York. Unfortunately, at the last minute, Yasuko decided not to grow with me in New York, so I opened Art Partner there without her.

Why start in New York?

I adored living and working in Los Angeles, but New York was – and is – a major hub for the fashion industry with a concentration of teams, models, clients and, at that time, an explosion of creativity. The best from all over the world were living and working in New York. I was also representing Enrique Badulescu[3] who was living and working there at the time. He was at the top of the market and was also very instrumental in building the agency. I ended up living in New York for 18 years. While growing up, my parents took my sisters, my brother and I to New York at least once or twice a year so I really felt like the city was my second home. Today, it’s still very much the headquarters of Art Partner.

Did you have any interest in fashion or photography before working with your brother and opening Art Partner?

As a child, I was sensitive to fashion and clothing being well done. My mother always took such pride in dressing us kids with special outfits that were made to measure. It’s something that has always resonated with me. I wasn’t thinking of it professionally at that stage though. My brother, on the other hand, has always been into fashion and clothes, and I have always been into my brother’s clothes. I always borrowed his clothes without asking! Perhaps also because my brother is a photographer, I feel close to photography on a human level. That has always been helpful in understanding the pressures and needs of someone who is creating every day, the kind of stress and challenge that it represents.

What has been your basic business strategy?

‘I get excited about deals that might not be considered important financially speaking. It’s not the money that drives me; I am just competitive.’

One constant has always been that I’ve represented talent I really believe in. Maybe it’s arrogant, but I feel I represent either the very best or people who have the potential to become the best. People with an original voice and the technical ability to execute their vision. When you believe in someone it’s very natural to go out and give them exposure. At least, that is what I’ve found over the years. You feel proud of working with such talent.

Can you describe the fashion landscape at the time you entered the industry?

When I started as an agent, the most important thing for a fashion photographer was to have a specific, unique signature. They were hired for what they were doing for themselves rather than what they were doing for the brand. Brands now want a specific vision for themselves, and photographers, for the most part, adapt to the brief, interpreting it and conveying it with their own style.

The geography was also very different when I started out – we didn’t have the same means of communication that exist now. Artists had different agents all over the world for different territories. For example, I had a whole division just for Japan and Korea with artists I didn’t necessarily represent in the West. It was incredibly profitable, but the time difference made it exhausting. There came a point where I had to stop. Today all our representation is worldwide, which tends to work out a lot better for an artist’s career. If you manage a career, you need to have a global strategy. You need to sometimes pass over a project in one territory to take a career-changing opportunity in another. You need a bird’s eye view of everything and a single agenda for the long-term development of an artist’s career, rather than being driven by short-term numbers or led by diverging agendas.

Do you recall the first big deal you did? The one that convinced you of the industry’s financial possibilities?

Yes, it was with Gianni Versace; the campaign my brother did with Madonna. At that time, I was Mario’s New York agent only so I was not even the agent on record for this European-based job. Gianni had a soft spot for me though, and from time to time he would advise me on things. Gianni was an incredibly generous person. Mario was his second choice, but life itself – a long story – and to a lesser degree my contribution, helped get him that job. I never actually took a fee for that deal though! My brother gave me a watch for it that I still cherish and wear very often.

Do you still get excited about the big deal?

I am always excited about it! I have truly always, always enjoyed it. The funny thing is that I get excited about deals that might not be generally considered important financially speaking. It’s not money that drives me; I am just competitive in everything I get involved in. I live 100 percent for the deal!

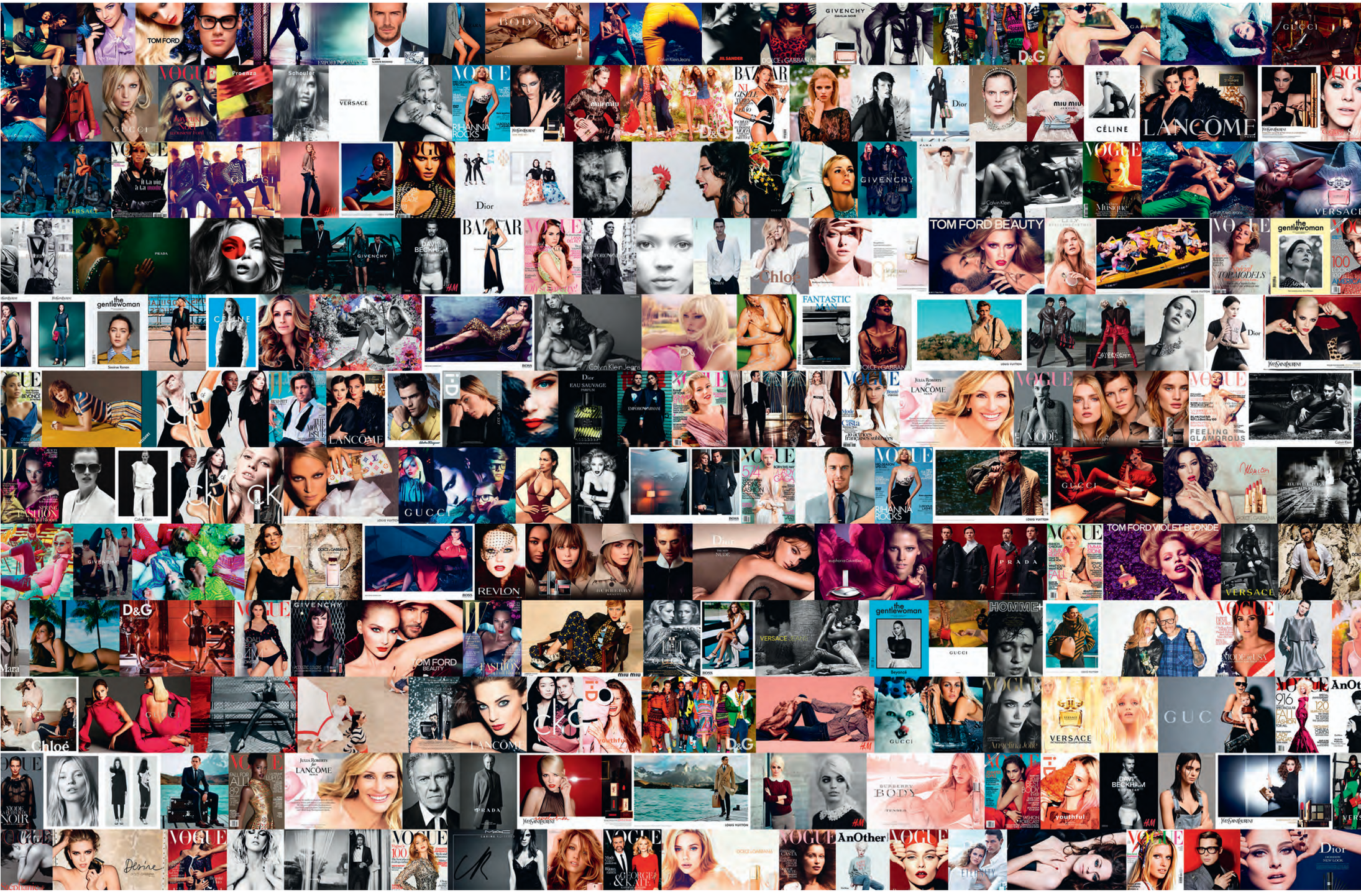
‘Knowledge is power’ is a common mantra. You must amass considerable intelligence about what’s going on in the industry at any given time. What part does this play in your job? Can you use that kind of information?

There is a lot of information out there, but you have to know how to use it. If you are properly informed you can do anything. That said, I don’t believe you can hard sell anything, that you can convince anyone to do anything. However, if you are well informed and you can present the right thing to the right people at the right price and at the right time, then you most probably have a deal.

What are the key elements steering artists’ careers – and how can an agent help?

Fashion photography, unlike art photography, is a team effort. I think at Art Partner we are good at advising people who to work with and then making those connections happen. We spend a lot of time and energy maintaining our creative networks and bringing the right teams together, as well as in developing platforms for those teams to work on. Trying to do a fashion image without the close collaboration of make-up artists, hairdressers and stylists would be very difficult.

Another thing is that as fashion inherently changes, so the work constantly needs to shift and adapt. Sometimes that is challenging and as agents we need to help our clients navigate. We are in a central place so we can see what is going on and can often bring ideas and suggestions back to the artist that help to tweak where they are going. Usually it is only a question of the artist looking deeper into their own strength and vision. For example, one strategic move I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the gentlewoman
FANTASTIC MAN
Colvin Klein Jeans
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TOM FORD VIOLET BLONDE
REVLON
PRADA
HOMME+
Angelina Jolie
BURBERRY BODY
youthful
AnOther
Désiré

remember with Mario was encouraging him to go into portraiture and beauty at a very early stage. He is so incredible with people it made sense. It was before celebrities were a part of everyday casting and certainly they were not always the easiest to photograph, but as a strategy it has certainly paid off. With Mert and Marcus, I remember pushing them to move into the *Vogue* stable. They were at the top of their game and synonymous with high glamour, but were not at *Vogue*, and I felt that was important for them. It's turned out to be an incredible relationship.

How do you judge a photographer's work or recognize when someone has what it takes to succeed? Is it as straightforward as finding someone with the potential to make big money?

Do you recall a particular image or series that any of your photographers created that convinced you Art Partner should represent them?
I always have an epiphany before the desire to represent, but more than an image or story, it is a body of work.

Are you interested in discovering young new talent?
I am not only interested, I'm actively following and pursuing it all the time! Over the past three years Art Partner has taken on young photographers Theo Wenner and Harley Weir, stylist Francesca Burns, and just this month, creative director Christopher Simmonds. We are super excited to have started 2016 with Zoe Ghertner and Colin Dodgson. We are very focused on representing a broad range of original styles.

often comes as a response to changes in the industry itself.

When is big *too* big, in terms of an agency's size, scale and annual revenue? Or is the sky the limit?
I don't know if there is an answer to that. For me personally I like to be strong and nimble. Things are changing very quickly in our business, in everything really. I don't want to be too big and slow to react, and risk going down like the Spanish Armada.

As an agent, how do you qualify the success of one of your artists?
I think of an artist as being successful when they love the work they do, and they are creating beautiful work consistently and are in a good flow. Income is important, too, of course, but it isn't

'90% of what you see in the Louvre originated as a commercial commission, working to a specific brief for a fee.'

It is not a thought process, it's a feeling process. Either their work moves me or it doesn't. I don't think anyone looks at something and 'thinks' if they like it or not. The same with me. Art Partner doesn't work with a required minimum 'income' for an artist to be represented. It is more about talent and the right fit.

Are there certain personality traits in a potential artist that you consider important in order for them to maintain a successful career?
I don't look for personality traits at all. It's all about talent and an authentic point of view. The artists I've worked with run the gamut. Some are shy; some are the life of the party; some are intellectual; some are homebodies. Some actually don't care about fashion and some live for it.

Compared to many agencies, you continue to maintain a relatively small roster of artists. What's the thinking behind this?
I don't believe in filling up endless rosters. Size matters, but for us what is important is the type of size. We keep growing regularly. We are always on the look out for top talent; we are just not desperate to become a behemoth in terms of numbers of artists. In terms of growth, I always reflect on this with the help of my core team. In terms of structure and logistics, I rely a lot on my management in New York and London. I can't say that I look at other companies' or industries' business models, as our business is so *sui generis* that strictly speaking, I don't think it would apply. Growth at Art Partner is very organic; it comes from within the company, and the first barometer for success. I think the artists would agree with me.

Can you pinpoint a particular moment when you took a specific decision that has since influenced the growth and success of Art Partner?
It was not so much my decision, in fact, it was my wife Amber's idea. In 1997 when my brother asked us to take over his production in Europe, she offered to go and open an Art Partner liaison office there. Being present in Europe has completely transformed our client base, as well as the direction of the artists we represent.

Let's discuss the fundamental dynamic at the heart of your profession – art versus business.
Although Art Partner is a commercial

agency, I believe without a doubt that we represent artists. Artists are people who can change the way you look and see and feel things; ours do that for the most part in the arena of fashion, beauty and luxury. Fashion is a major force in culture so that is very powerful. Look at how Mert and Marcus' work has defined an entire era of beauty, a type of woman. Alasdair McLellan introduced a completely different point of view of woman, fashion, and London. His vision has become the point of reference for a whole generation of photographers.

Artists working in fashion need to create within a set context and still come with something fresh and relevant to say. Ninety percent of what you see in the Louvre originated as a commercial commission, working to a specific brief for a fee. Granted, not every photograph is art, but you cannot deny that there is a lot of work in the fashion industry that should qualify as fine-art photography. This is true for many editorial images in which one works at the freer side of fashion photography, but it can also be true of photographs made for a commercial client. If an image moves us, if it is iconic and reflects or creates a moment in culture, then its meaning is greater than its original commercial purpose. I am seeing more demand than ever for photography books and fine-art prints. Even with everything that's going on with the rise of digital media, books and prints are an important part of a fashion photographer's career, which we take very seriously.

Let's discuss the notion of longevity in an artist's career. How do photographers keep their edge over many years?
Talent is paramount, but consistency and range tell the test of time. What keeps an artist at the top of their game for so many years is that they have a vision and a technical mastery. Their work can go in and out of fashion, but if you choose true talent, they perform consistently and they can constantly reassess their own work. They will always have longevity.

What are your feelings when an artist wants to leave the agency?
We have been very fortunate as most people do not want to leave the agency. But when it has happened, we take it as an opportunity for growth and change. Life has a curious way of guiding us. In my experience, when a door has closed, two windows have often opened. But it is always a very sad affair on a personal level.

'Mert and Marcus' work has defined an entire era of beauty. Alasdair McLellan's vision has become the point of reference for a whole generation.'

How do you define the Art Partner team spirit?
I truly believe that you go up only when the people you are surrounded with also go up. That's how I run my company and I think it's reflected in Art Partner's culture. The sense of teamwork is remarkable and there's very little ego. Just a lot of really hard-working people who are passionate about what they do. In fact, Art Partner is not structured on commissions as most agencies are. I've seen it proven year after year that an all-hands-on-deck support for the artist yields stronger results than when agents work independently.

You are still representing your brother and working with your wife, so would you say your agency is a bit like a family?
Absolutely and there is nothing better than working with friends and family. It can be difficult, but there is nothing better! When you work as hard and long hours as we all do, it would be pretty empty if it was just a job. I'd say that's true for the Art Partner team as well as for the artists. I look for a kind of 'family' chemistry or openness when I'm meeting new artists or interviewing someone for a position. If the vibe is too business-like or corporate, it generally doesn't work.

How do you manage your three offices on a daily basis?
I don't. I have an amazing management team in Europe and New York who run the day to day. I do like to look at strategy and numbers, but not on a daily basis. And for operations, I work with a team of senior agents who are top of the line and who have been with me for years and years: Candice Marks in New York, Brigitte Sondag in Paris, and Ayesha Arefin in London. And of course, my wife, Amber, who is a senior agent in London and who also leads strategy and growth across the three offices. I think the better question is how they all manage to manage me!

What would you say are the differences between the main fashion-image markets in the US, France, Italy and the UK? And what about China, which I know you've been working on lately?
Years ago I would have told you that the

US always wanted a smile and that they preferred blondes, that the Asian market preferred dark hair with white skin, and the Europeans want tans. Back then you could stereotype certain tastes by cultures, but that model is disappearing faster than you can read this article! Looks, styles and trends are becoming more and more global.

How has the move towards digital media and imagery altered your business and your artists' work?
We have been 'digital' for years. The move from film into digital photography was a big shift in the early 2000s, then several years ago there was a big move towards moving image and we grew extensively in that area. In fact, Mario Sorrenti is currently finishing a feature film. But the biggest shift yet is the one we are seeing today from print-based advertising to social-media-based advertising. Social media means clients don't advertise with a campaign anymore; they engage, interact, inform and entertain their community all year round; and on many platforms.

All these platforms need constant content. Some of that is advertising and some of it – a lot of it – is not. In some ways it opens up the playing field to express, communicate, create in new ways, and the results can be incredible. However, while you can't ignore what is happening in communication and technology, you also can't let it take over or determine the creative process, or allow it to replace quality with quantity. Artists in fashion are leaders, visionaries, it won't work if we all start to follow too much or if the quantity of content required makes it impossible to maintain quality. In any case, we and our artists are embracing the changes wholeheartedly.

Look at Charlotte Tilbury. She has 810,000 followers on Instagram and is building a whole community and business around her own platform. The launch of her cosmetics line[4] was phenomenal in terms of how much she achieved in such a short period of time – it is now competing with brands that have been well established for decades. We have the three most 'seen' photographers on Instagram in the world: Mario Testino with 2.1 million Instagram followers, and *The Towel Series*, one of the most successful content strands in the industry. Then there's Terry Richardson with 1 million Instagram followers, whose video for the song 'Wrecking Ball' is approaching over 1 billion views. As well as Mert Alas with 630,000. As an agency we've brought in social-media strategists and creatives over the last two years to work with us and our artists on bespoke launches and client briefs.

What are your thoughts on Trunk Archive's acquisition of entire agencies? Is it a menace or an opportunity for a business like yours?
I don't know what to say. I hope they also have in mind other things than 'economies of scale' and 'streamlined operations', which big corporations must be based on. I hope that the artists are also at the forefront of the project. If this is the case, I think we will all benefit. If not, perhaps it could become an opportunity.

What are your thoughts on the current 'fashion film' landscape?
There is something very exciting about being presented with so many new mediums to communicate in – sound, movement, graphics – and over the years I've been impressed with how the photographers have responded to the new technology. Alasdair McLellan, for example, does these amazing moving portraits that are very much his 'photograph' expressed in more depth. Steven Klein has this incredible way or working with sound effects in a powerful way. We previewed his Kate Moss McQueen film in a surround-sound theatre in Paris, and it was so strong, everyone was on the edge of their seats. Having said that, I'm not sure if there is a sustained appetite from brands' audiences to see long-format fashion films. What is more interesting now is the ability to share shorter vignettes through social media and even as loops in store imagery. We are doing this now, to one extent or another on almost all of our shoots.

Would it be fair to say that agencies now need to consider their artists more like brands?
Yes, they are very much like brands – and they have the same challenge brands have in communicating their 'worlds'. As an agency we see supporting them in this communication as an important part of our role. It can extend to books, exhibitions, events, and their related press and social-media platforms. Just as with brands, the work we do in the digital space doesn't mean we are leaving out the work we do for print or for that matter, film, it's rather a layer added on top. The secret is how to work all these elements together and with a holistic approach.

The industry is now bigger and faster, which creates the potential for more work than ever before. Does this affect the role of the agent? Is it *only* a good thing because it means more work or is it potentially damaging?
There are always two sides to the story. There is definitely a downside when the pace and quantity is uncontrolled. The upside, as you say, is of course more opportunities to work. The agent's role is to be sure that artists are protected and not overwhelmed on any given booking by the need for more, more, more. We have to be strategic and prepared in how we help to surround artists with the right teams that can help execute new forms of content, as well as logistics on set, so there is still space to create and time to think. Sometimes it's about knowing when to pass on jobs that could be good money, but might lead to burnout or won't allow an artist the time or resources to work well.

How would you describe the rise of the fashion stylist over the past 15 years?
Fashion stylists used to be tied to one magazine for editorial and they were confined to photo shoots when it came to advertising. I think it really all started to change when Joe McKenna launched his own magazine, *Joe*, in the early 1990s. And then when Melanie Ward became famous for consulting with Helmut Lang, and Carine Roitfeld started consulting for brands like Missoni and Gucci, as did Joe McKenna for Jil Sander. Art Partner introduced this way of working into the US. The first major example being Carine Roitfeld and Calvin himself. This created a dramatic power shift, giving stylists a major role in the commercial side of the industry, whereas previously they were confined to editorial. They bring a broader view into a fashion house and have become indispensable at most major houses. Stylists have enormous exposure across the board; they are working in almost every country, touching every product, working with the best photographers, the best designers and the best models. There is a certain knowledge they gain from this experience and they bring it to their work. They are in a unique position to inform the brands of the different movements and trends as they are happening, not after – and that is priceless!

With the current phenomenon of imagery being shared freely in the public domain on platforms such as Instagram, what are your thoughts on copyright and exclusivity, and the licensing of archive imagery that may already belong in the public domain?
There is a clear difference between an image being 'accessible', i.e., 'belonging' to the public, and an image being used to sell or promote something. Just because an image was seen on Instagram, or on any digital platform for that matter, doesn't mean it is available to promote or endorse something. I think the lines were blurred for a while in the initial frenzy, but the distinction is a clear one, and I don't see a lot of brands infringing copyright or trying to use images without authority. If anything, what is impressive is how most brands uphold the highest ethical standards.

What's the shrewdest specific piece of advice you've given one of your artists?
I'm not sure if it's shrewd, but there is one piece of advice I have given to young artists (and I often remind myself and my team), which is that we are in this for the long term. There will be both ups and downs, and the people you see for a while going up will be the very same people you see for a while coming down. It is so very important to respect everyone all the time, regardless of who they are or what position they hold.

What's the shrewdest piece of advice you've been given by somebody else?
Find something you love and pursue it.

Lastly, if you had to sum up your career, what would you say?
Fun. Fabulous. Amazing. Frustrating. Overwhelming. Sometimes I think you could do a South American *telenovela* about the stuff we go through. It would be a huge success! In any case, it's too rich of an experience to be condensed into a few words.

'Sometimes I think you could do a South American *telenovela* about the stuff we go through at the agency. It would be a huge success!'

1. In a September 1988 *Los Angeles Times* article, Jonathan Gold wrote: 'Flaming Colossus, more or less a noisy clubhouse for black-clad fashion models and the sort of expatriate continentals who design sportswear or do a little cinematography on the side, is near MacArthur Park in the throbbing heart of Westlake's Central American community, a shabby Knight's of Columbus lodge made over with cardboard signs, skeins of Christmas lights and ingenuous, neo-primitive art on the walls. If your high-school gym had been decorated by a fifth-grader with a fetish for Congolese body painting, your senior prom might have looked like this.'

2. In the late 1960s and 1970s, Yasuko Austin, née Nagazumi, starred in two Gerry Anderson-produced series, *The Protectors* and *Space: 1999*, before becoming a producer and advertising executive. Her daughter, Miki Berenyi, was lead singer and guitarist with 1990s shoegazing band Lush, which recently reformed after an 18-year hiatus.

3. New York-based photographer Enrique Badulescu was born in Mexico City and first made his name shooting bands for *The Face* in the late 1980s.

4. The make-up-artist-to-the-stars' eponymous cosmetics line launched late 2014.

5. *Terry Richardson: Volumes 1 & 2: Portraits and Fashion*.

6. Luchford's *A Fashion Story: Gucci Cruise 2016* can be viewed on YouTube.

‘We’re kind of making it up together.’

Demna Gvasalia and Mark Borthwick on the joy of filling Balenciaga’s blank new page.

By Jonathan Wingfield
Photographs by Mark Borthwick

“L’esprit Nouveau”

Par hasard

Les œuvres d’âme

Les aventures, ce rêve / parfois égales… parfois non’sense à boire
à voir entre temps sans avoir les conséquences … je suis silence’
chaleurs vivant entre nous sa ressemblance d’éternité …
“l’étoile l’âme oeil seul” … l’âme et caetera’ arrache arrache
arrache… nonchalence’… on s’embrasse les fleurs’…
je danse dans les champs de lavande’ par conséquence
non’chalence “se lache se lache se lache” je t’embrasse
c’est vivant - c’est vivant - c’est vivant

val de cœur ‘

x

BALENCIAGA

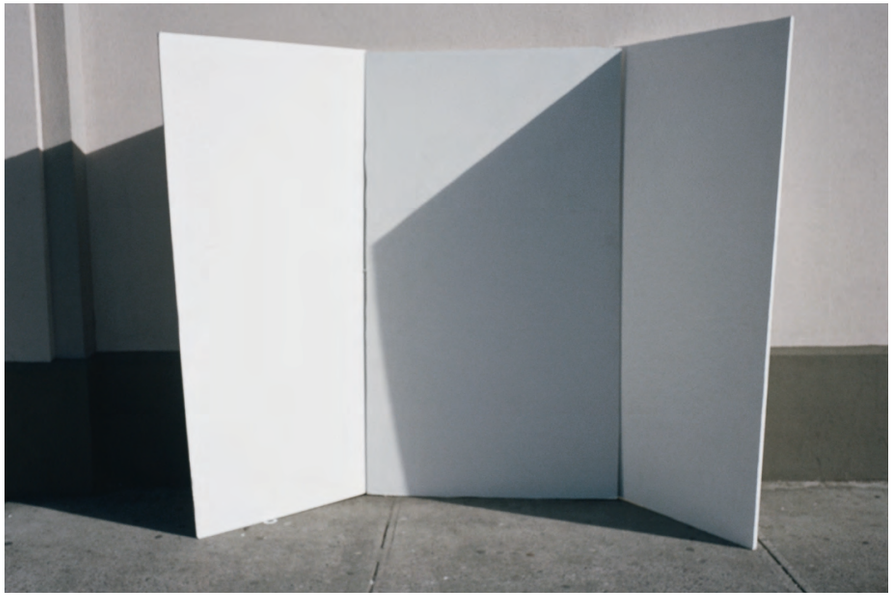

Fig 1

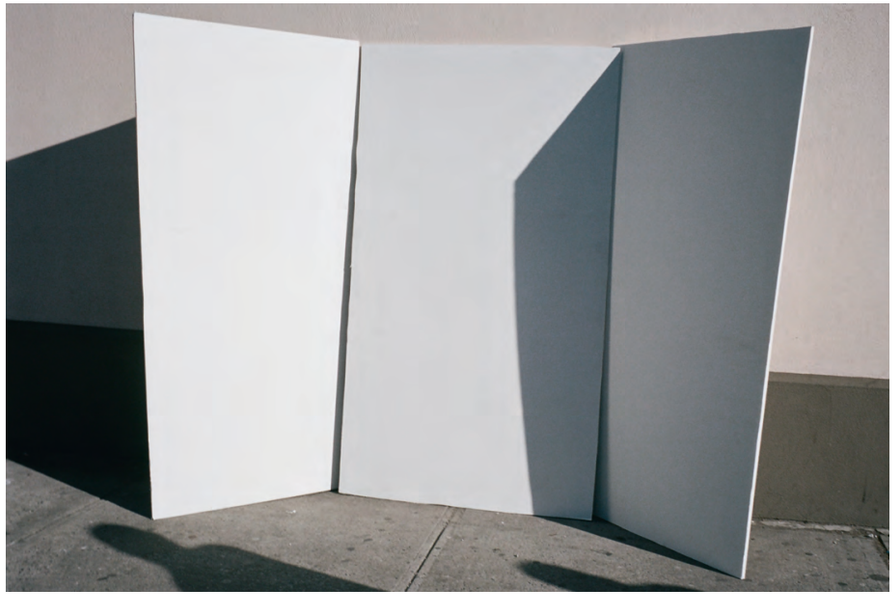

Fig 2

TO THE BEAT OF HAND'S AN IMAGE TIP'ING HATS TO WELCOME'IN ONES DRESS TO CURTAIN IT'S BODY'S UN'DRESS AWAKENING A PORTRAIT LAY'N TO DESIRE AN ESCAPE WASHED BY HER WATERS TIME AN AGRARIAN PASSAGE OF LAND'SCAPES HIS REQUIEM SPUN FROM TORN FROM A HOLE TO VIEW ALL RIP'S TO RIOT ANOTHER SIDE OF YOU US'SUN'ING HAND'S DRAWING FRIEND'S CARRYING COUPLES CUDDLING TURNING FAST SLOWING MOVING PERCEPTION'S PAST AMBIGUOUS AY FORM OF LIFE AMORPHOUS AY TEST TO TIME INSPIRING TURNING BURNING FABRIC'S CURLING TO THE WIND'S AT LAST SAW BODY'S CURTSYING APPROACHING EVERYBODY'S REFLECTION'S IN WONDERMENT ARCANE IN TEMPERAMENT SERENADING POURING A GLASS OF SPRING TO SUMMER LOVE'S LETTER'S AY RITUAL CLOSER TO WIND MY'N MASK OF SHADOW'S INSPIRING ABSENCE OSCURE'S ME OUT OF FOCUS SEEN AS IF TO LIFT MY OWN INTANGIBLE PURPOSE THAT'S LIFE TASTING PASSION'S NEVER WAISTING PLANTING PROSAIC SHAPES ABSTRACTING THE NORMALCY OF ENTITY OBSERVING THIS REQUIEM OF OL'INTOXICATING THE JOY'S AN ORDINARY THING IT'S OWN IMAGINING ONE WAY OF WALKING AN'OTHER WAY'S OF SEE'ING TRADITION MAY BE IT'S OWN TORMENT BAYTH'D BY HISTORY'S MYTHICAL SEA SUN'LIGHT UPON MY OWN UN'KNOWN IDENTITY GOLDEN SHADOWS TO DANCE IT'S OWN FRAGILITY EXPERIMENTAL'S EXPLORING FASCINATION'S INSOUCIANT VISION THAT'S INNOCENCE TO ME OF BOUNDLESS LIMITLESS PERCEPTION'S CLARITY LIKE BREATHING FEELING'S THERE GROUNDING THAT'S OUT OF TOUCH EYE KEEP ON TOUCHING IT'S PATH'S TO RESURRECT AN EASY SPEED'S TO REALAX AN RECEIVE FOR YOU PUT ME AT EASE TOOK PICTURES OF ME PLEASE SNAP'T BY THE WAY YOU SEE CHARMED BY YOUR DREAM MY'N LISTENING TO VOICE EYE PLANT AN ADMIRE CHERISH TO HARNESS ALL CITY'S AN GARDENS ENCOUNTER AN IMAGE TO FACE IN VISCERAL ATTACHING FACES SMILING HOLDING HAND'S TO GETHER CLAPPING DRAWN FROM THIS WAKE EY'M TOUCHING BODY'S MELTING LOVE'S IN THE MAKING IN THE WAKING OF THING'S EY'M TOUCHED BY THE GIVING OF HAND'S INQUISITIVE EYE AM TOUCHING GIVING THANK'X ESCORTING SHADOW'S AN AWARENESS UNIVERSAL HER MUSIC'S AN INSTRUMENTAL FEELING REVEALING IT'S NESTING TO WELCOME IN ALL ISM'S ARE FLOWER'S WHOM BLOOM INSIDE OF YOU OFTEN TO POLLEN TO WITH GRAIN'S WHOM SEED IN'SIDE OF YOU LIFE CONTAIN'S AY MALE TO FEMALE FERTILIZING YOU INSIDE OF ME MAKING LOVE TO YOU AHHH OUR BODY'S TO BODY OUR BODILY GLUE AWAKENING OUR OWN IN MORNING'S DEW LIFT'S EARTH'S UN'EARTHING THE SECRET'S OF OUR UNIVERSE IT'S UNIVERSAL CLOTH MY CLOTHE'S AN ATTIRE TO SHARE YOUR OWN EFFIGY'S AY REFLECTION EVERY'WHERE A WAY TO SEE AN AURA TO VIEW AY HOMAGE OF YOU REFLECT'S IN ALL THING'S YOU DO AS AY MIRROR AY VOYAGE TO SHADOW RE'FINING ALL MYSTERY'S MYSTICAL ABSURDITIES INSPIRING AN ALCHEMY OF ACCIDENT'S CREATING A CLASH OF CIRCUMSTANCE CONGREGATING TO VOICE A VISION FASCINATING CHAIR'S ONCE EMPTY LEG'S SEPARATING TO VOICE A VISION OF SENSUAL MINDS PARTICIPATING BREAKING TO NOISE ANOTHER'S CHOICE BETWEEN YOUR LEG'S AN OVER YOUR SHOULDERS WRAP'T BETWEEN WHAT'S NOT SEEN UN'COVER'S YOUR LOVER TO DISCOVER ANOTHER TIP'ING HAT'S TO CRAFT FROM ART TO HEART IN SHADOW'S MARK'S

BALENCIAGA

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Fig 3

Fig 4

DAYS OF SELF DESERVE

DREAMS AN ALTER EGO

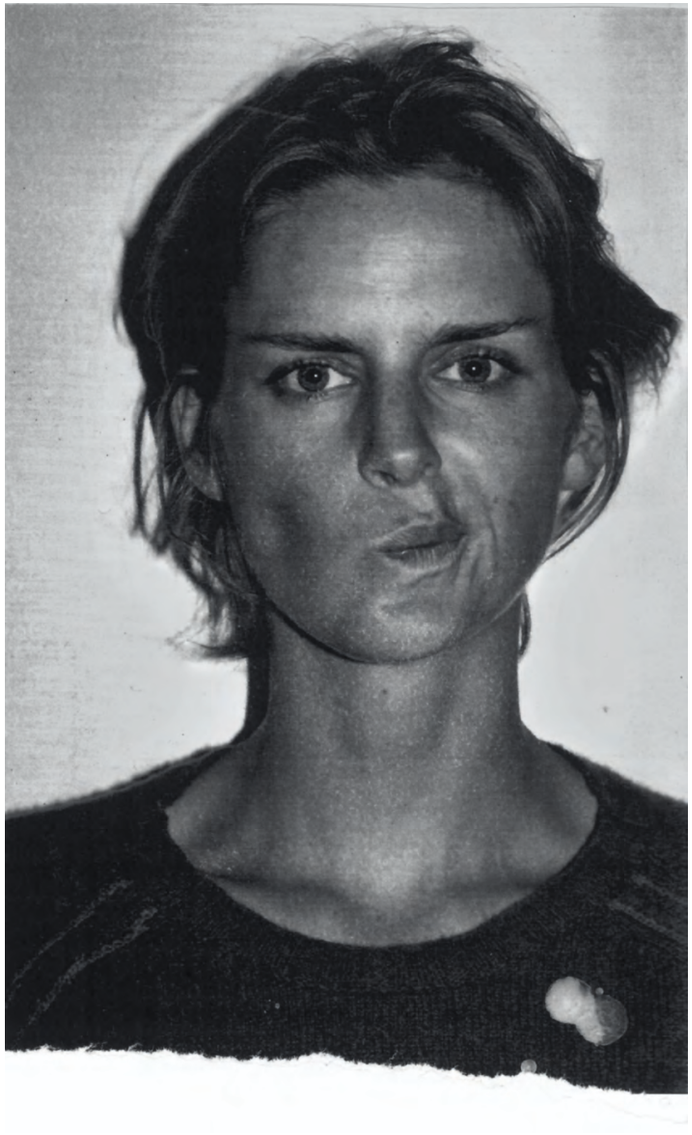


Fig 5

EVERY SOUL'S VOICE AN INDIVIDUAL'S DIVINE INTERMISSION THAT'S CALLED UN'KNOWN

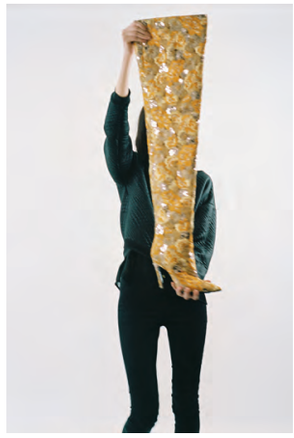


Fig 6

Fig 7

It's 7pm on a Saturday night on Rue du Cherche-Midi in Paris' sixth *arrondissement*, the eve of Demna Gvasalia's debut show for Balenciaga. Sitting around a long table in the house's design atelier, sharing a bottle of wine, are Gvasalia and photographer Mark Borthwick. There is an overwhelming sense of calm. Silence even.

When Gvasalia – best known as the creative face behind fashion collective Vetements – arrived at Balenciaga late last year, among his first initiatives was to contact Borthwick, who he had never met, but whose work he admired for being photography that expressed mood more than product.

Demna subsequently invited Mark to join him on his Balenciaga journey. Not documenting the new era exactly. Nor creating formal fashion imagery. Rather, just doing what came naturally in the moment. Which has always been Borthwick's way of working, a non-method that first produced his ever-influential, colour-saturated, 'accidental' aesthetic in the 1990s.

As we begin chatting, Lionel Vermeil strolls in and joins us. An industry veteran, who was at one point Balenciaga's communications director, before recently becoming the uniquely titled Director of Fashion and Luxury Intelligence at Kering, the group that owns Balenciaga, Vermeil was instrumental in Gvasalia's appointment.

The house of Balenciga considers the Georgian designer's arrival as a continuation of its own history, one founded on the shifting rapport between pure craft and commerce, the avant-garde and products. Indeed, with his experience at Margiela, he certainly brings the unorthodox back, but the house was also shrewd enough to take into account the time the designer spent at Louis Vuitton. In other words, Gvasalia understands that any radical creative warp always needs to be woven into the weft of the luxury business.

That said, the work that Gvasalia and Borthwick have been quietly producing since late last year is a reflection of their shared creative process: freeform, revelling in carte blanche, while revealing a studious return to Balenciaga's forward-thinking fashion and design purity.

For the moment, neither Gvasalia nor Borthwick know exactly what their collaboration will result in. An advertising campaign, a book, an exhibition? All three? It might simply turn out to be a creative exercise in tone setting, a partnership that helps Gvasalia shape his vision for the house. As Borthwick says, 'Photography is less about documentation than it is about a shared experience'.

The resulting conversation and portfolio gives a first glimpse inside a creative process as it is happening, a taster of a new vision of fashion, as well as a clue as to why fashion houses such as Balenciaga sense that creative freedom is the best route back to relevance.

Demna, when you think of Mark's work what does it evoke?

Demna Gvasalia: Freedom is a good word to start with. Arriving here at Balenciaga really felt like something new, something free, like a blank page. I said to myself, 'Who am I going to work with?', and the first person who came to mind was Mark, for exactly the reasons you'd imagine: his work captures freedom, intimacy, warmth, experiences. And I felt that collaborating with Mark – I wouldn't even call it collaboration, because it sounds a bit formal – would be the best way to bring out the beauty of what we are to doing here at Balenciaga.

Did you have any preconceived ideas of how you wanted to work with Mark?

Demna: I didn't even have a clear idea of the collection, let alone what Mark was going to shoot, so it started from zero and became something. With the pre-Fall collection last December – which was not really my collection and didn't represent my vision – working with Mark became something of a transitional exercise. He and I basically got to know each other while we were doing the very first day's shooting, and it was a brilliant experience: we shot in the Balenciaga archives, modernizing them through images, and we had a lot of fun.

'Paris is a tough city to live in. People don't necessarily smile here, they're always grumpy, and I think that inspires me.'

Was there a particular piece in the archives that caught your eye or that you felt a connection to?

Demna: I felt more of a connection when I actually held up certain pieces on their hangers and realized how heavy they are. In the images of them that we see in fashion-history books they seem so light. I think that is the magic of Cristóbal Balenciaga and what makes the work he did so modern: he didn't want women to suffer; he didn't want to put a corset on her; he made this dress so she could actually be quite round and still feel elegant in that retro way, but at the same time comfortable. She didn't need to go to the gym to be able to wear that dress. That surprised me.

You mentioned before that you had a lot of fun shooting in the archives. Curiously, the word fun rarely gets used when discussing fashion these days.

Demna: Oh, it was great fun, lots of fun, screaming, drinking, smoking, talking. We didn't *work*, you couldn't call it that… It's like this with my other brand[1]: I work with people who are my friends, and they're from my generation. Obviously, with Mark and Balenciaga, it's a different thing, but I was so impressed that the same feelings could be experienced.

Mark, to what extent were you aware of Demna's work prior to meeting him?

Mark: It was completely unknown territory until I was introduced to it by my children. My daughter Bibi is quite good friends with Virgil, who does Off-White[2], and through Virgil there was a connection to Vetements, and then Demna. I was surprised by the parallels between Vetements and what my son Joey is into. He's an 18-year-old kid growing up in New York who is completely besotted with the whole philosophy behind Supreme – the way that brand is collaborating continuously and touching upon everything that is happening right now. The minute I first saw Vetements, it felt like something relevant, not because it was *similar* to Supreme, but because it was functioning completely outside the confines of the fashion industry. It had that kind of transparency and innocence, naivety and fragility to it that made you want to love it, made you want to smile, made you want to be part of it.

'The minute I first saw Vetements, it felt like something relevant, because it was functioning outside the confines of the fashion industry.'

So that first shoot was the first time you'd met Mark?

Demna: Yes. I was always very aware of his work, because I had worked at Margiela. When I started Vetements, two and a half years ago, the first image I put on my mood board was an old portrait Mark had taken of Stella Tennant.

Is it the one in which she's kind of biting the inside of her mouth?

Demna: Exactly. She was elegant, and she was fun in that picture…

Mark, can you remember the day you shot that one?

Mark Borthwick: Absolutely, yes. It was a really fine afternoon with Stella; she had popped over for a cup of tea. I think that we had just finished shooting something 'serious' and she then wore a bunch of T-shirts and I shot a roll of film. It was a moment of chance when something special took hold of me.

What do you think about Demna's world in the context of Balenciaga?

Mark: Well, aesthetically, the idea of Demna at Balenciaga just brings so much excitement to the idea of doing something that is *real*. I mean, that is where I've always come from, but it is inspiring to see real actually exist, without being a preconceived idea or simply following in the footsteps of something that's come before. As a reflection of the industry today – especially living in New York, where *nobody* is prepared to bring the fashion itself into a context that is real – what Demna is doing is really beautiful and important.

Demna: For me, the 'real' that Mark is talking about comes from the rapport between the person in the picture and the garment. That's what always interests and inspires me. That's exactly what I am trying to do at Balenciaga: find this new relationship between how the woman and the body and the product interact. It feels exciting to be planning how we can define this interaction at Balenciaga.

You use the term 'product' quite overtly. Some people consider it almost a dirty word.

Demna: Well, I am a very product-oriented designer. I mean, my other brand is called Vetements! But the product doesn't exist without the person who wears it, so it's how you bring the two of them together that counts.

Mark: It's a beautifully fine line, because right now, this evening, the new Balenciaga woman doesn't even exist yet.

Demna: That's what's most exciting about right now.

So you don't yet know how she is going to be depicted, but something is going to come out of that process?

Mark: Yes, I mean it is an extreme clash of aesthetics that's going on here, and that is where it is really masterful.

Demna: I'm sometimes asked, 'Who is the woman you design for?' But I don't design for a specific woman. I

make clothes I see myself as a dressmaker rather than a designer or a fashion designer – and then the women who those clothes appeal to will naturally become the ones we make them for. That gets defined *after* we make the clothes, and so depicting that in the visuals is very much a part of that discovery.

Lionel Vermeil: When I started in this business we called the people making clothes *créateurs*. You had the *couturier* and you had the *créateur*. Then it was the creative director and then they became 'artists'. But now Demna has moved away from all of that. He calls himself a dressmaker, not pretending to be anything else. He is making clothes to be worn.

Demna, was it important to you that Mark's pictures even depicted the first collection? Was there any specific brief?

Demna: Mark didn't even see the collection until two days before he started shooting, and I don't think we need to define anything beyond this pictorial freedom – that's all that counts.

Mark: As far as I'm concerned, we're kind of making it up together; there's a lot of joy and feeling in the process. I certainly like to take a role in participating with the clothing: I find that the extraordinary casting that Demna has orchestrated is unbelievably relevant to the garments themselves, and to creating an identity for that new Balenciaga woman.

Again, the word joy that you've just used seems particularly relevant: it could be construed as naive, but you'd presume that any successful collaboration would be born out of a shared joyful experience.

Mark: In the very first minute of the first conversation we had together, it was made clear: 'We're going to have fun'.

Demna, Mark referred to your 'orchestration' of the casting. Could you talk a little about this, because it is obviously so central to what you do?

Demna: It is about the credibility of the woman who wears those clothes; it has to look believable on the woman when she wears a particular garment – that is the most important criterion for us. The key is character casting, and not just putting the clothes on blank models who you'd never expect to see wearing them in real life. The models need to *feel* the clothes that they wear. Many of the girls we're using have actually said, 'Oh, I *love* my look'.

Tell me about when you first arrived here at Balenciaga, about the conversations that you were having at the house?

Demna: I went into the archives and I had a look at all the periods of the house – from the very beginning up to now. It was an extremely informative day for me.

Lionel: I remember you had a specific way of looking at the archives; like taking pictures, but not of the piece itself…

Demna: I already knew most of the Balenciaga archive pieces from books and imagery, so while it was very exciting to see them in real life, it was more about understanding why and how they were made. I was keen to understand Cristóbal Balenciaga's approach: how he worked with women, his relationship to the body, the weight of the garments, the proportions. In his era, of course, there were different things that influenced the rapport between the body and the garment: he would open the collars to show the jewellery, or shorten the sleeves, which today wouldn't be so relevant. It was nonetheless important for me to understand the methods that he used and then to think about how they could be applied in 2016. I like to make clothes that give women an attitude, while being refined and elegant in a modern way that doesn't fall into 'past elegance'.

How would you define modern elegance?

Demna: Elegance used to be associated with something quite soft, and I think in recent times it's become harder, stronger, more aggressive in a way. I think aggressive is definitely the right word to associate with modern elegance. And in a way there is a certain aggression that naturally comes with the girls we've cast for tomorrow's show.

Mark: But there is still something quite noble about them. They are characters unto themselves and they don't feel controlled.

Mark, you've been working in fashion for many years – firstly as a make-up artist in the 1980s, then with your photography, which really emerged in the 1990s. How do these experiences give you a framework not only to understand the industry, but also to enable you to deconstruct or reconstruct that in your photography?

Mark: Curiously, what we've been doing today for Balenciaga feels like a subtle reflection of many experiences that have occurred to me over the years. And I love that distant familiarity becoming something totally new and fresh. I was there photographing the collection, but the collection enabled itself to become something else; and that freedom reminds me of sensations I felt maybe 15, 20 years ago. But it has greater meaning now; when I was younger, maybe I didn't even see it in that context because it didn't have a sense or a meaning back then.

You once made a photographic series of 'fake ads' – placing fashion brand logos on very calm and empty street images[3] – in doing so altering the images' meaning, questioning what those brand logos stand for, and so on. To what extent are the images you're making now altered by their being framed within a Balenciaga project?

Mark: Advertising itself has become so conformist; so much about selling commodities. I have always been more inspired by the notion of *removing* everything to give some meaning. In doing that, I encourage it to become something else, something new, and something fresh, which seems important when you consider how so much advertising is just a question of filling and filling and filling the space. But I just don't see the world in that way. The pictures I take exist because control has been removed, or not even considered. The feelings in the pictures come through because of the shared experience with a stylist or a friend or the person I am photographing. So, to answer your question, the Balenciaga frame doesn't even really exist at this point.

So much of your photography is about what is *not* in the picture; there is that really beautiful sense of absence. So I was interested in discussing how a brand's products – Demna's word – can be expressed through absence. Is this something you're even conscious of?

Mark: I think I learned a lot of lessons when I was a young photographer, being up against a certain set of rules and how in your own world there shouldn't be any rules. I was put in situations where I was seen to be breaking the rules, when I was told, 'You can't do that'. But 'that' – whatever it is – shouldn't even exist in your own world, it shouldn't even be something you question. So the absence comes from simplifying the picture, showing it as purely as possible, removing all traces of someone else's rules.

Demna: I think the absence in Mark's work has so much presence. I feel like you don't need to have a product. The absence makes you question things and it hits you much deeper than just on the surface where you say, 'OK, that's a bag'.

Although the bag seems to have become a cornerstone – maybe even a necessary evil – in the language of modern fashion advertising.

Demna: Which seems so not modern. Especially when you consider some of the original campaign images from Cristóbal Balenciaga's time. One is just white with only the label; another is a picture of the room in the original Balenciaga space where there is a sofa and two women sitting on it – probably dressed in Balenciaga, but you wouldn't know because the picture is so small. You can just see that something is happening there, but it's so restrained, so quiet and refined. I mean, you would never see anything like that now. There was no product. It comes back to Mark's pictures: it is what you don't see that holds a desire and an interest, and that is something that I love.

Mark: That is an interesting point, because if you liberate the image and take everything away it is completely free, and you can encourage it to interpret whatever you want. And I think that is the space where we are right now with this project.

In that it feels liberating?

Mark: Yes. I think as a young photographer I found it really complicated being told that you can't be free, you can't break the law, this has to be one look, and so on. So my reaction is always to simplify, get to the essence, don't get distracted by the rules.

Did you always feel like that, or was it only since you started working in fashion?

Mark: I think it is genuinely innate as to who I am. And you become who you are, thank God; maybe you are not aware of it when you are younger. But it is interesting when you start getting a bit older and you have children: you learn so much more from listening and it is that soft, really quiet space, through the listening that there is beautiful absence.

'Elegance used to be associated with something quite soft, and I think in recent times it's become harder, stronger, more aggressive.'

'Advertising has become so conformist. The pictures I take exist because control has been removed, or not even considered.'

Demna, tell us about your surroundings and your life when you first started expressing yourself creatively. Are there elements of that time that still inform your work now?
Demna: I was drawing, always, but I think what influenced me most in the way I work creatively now was the absence of certain things. I grew up in a post-Soviet country that was deprived of a lot of information until the beginning of the 1990s. So this absence and the lack of resources really motivated a hunger and desire for discovering things. We literally had to buy magazines on the black market if we wanted to find out what was happening beyond our very sterile, culturally and socially closed space. Once that period was over I faced a time at the beginning of the 1990s when there were many different directions in music and culture suddenly available for me to investigate: warehouse parties, rave, goth, hip-hop. I did the whole thing.

So you were kind of culturally promiscuous.
Demna: Yes, which I see as a virtue now. But I got into them all at the same time, so I wasn't just dressed as a hip-hop teenager; I was dressed as a mix of all of that, and that sense of mixed influences – the patchwork – definitely continues to inspire me.

When you look back at that time now, would you say you were rebellious?
Demna: Not at all, I was afraid of everything, until suddenly everything became possible and I kind of discovered myself with that sudden clash and explosion of possibilities.

Since then, have you had to exercise restraint or do you try to replicate that sense of abandon and wanting it all?
Demna: I try to replicate it and I realize that's part of my character as well now, so there is nothing I can do about it.

What about you Mark, when you were younger, did you consider yourself rebellious?
Mark: No, I wasn't rebellious about anything whatsoever. But I think that is because I lived in the middle of it all. I grew up just off the King's Road[4]: my parents were a little bit older, but they were really free, and I think they found it exciting to see this whole new generation of young kids on the King's Road, going through the punk movement, through New Romanticism[5]. I was this young kid who came out of all that: I was 16, 17 at the pinnacle of the punk movement. Then I started wearing make-up, living in squats, and I dressed as a girl or a boy – as a New Romantic – for a good six years, and that's what led me into make-up and fashion. But again, there were no rules, and if there were, they were there to be broken.

So you were brought up in an environment where freedom of expression was actively encouraged.
Mark: Yes, very much so. Especially from my mother's side, she was the one who enabled it. Which helped me understand that you didn't have to rebel for the sake of rebelling, because I was surrounded by people who were very curious themselves. I was exceedingly curious, very innocent and naive, and also quite fragile because I didn't know who I was. I started wearing make-up every day; it was the first time when it didn't matter if you were gay or straight because you could be anything, and that was really liberating.

Demna, did your family encourage freedom of expression, despite the culturally restrictive era?
Demna: No, not at all, it was very constrained. I definitely had to go looking for it; I can't say I found it indoors at that period, definitely not.

And what does freedom represent to you now, in terms of your work and how you want to express your ideas?
Demna: Freedom really represents the idea of enjoying what you do. I would never be able to force myself to do something. I love my job every day and I don't even consider it a job.

What about you, Mark? One would presume that freedom is one of the driving forces behind your photography. Is that a conscious thing?
Mark: No, I don't think it's conscious; I think it's a state of mind. As I mentioned before, having kids is a way of reflecting and approaching life that liberates any sense of conformity. As you get older, you do realize that everything you do comes from yourself, and that instils an incredible amount of freedom. And I think if you can project that onto your family and friends, and everybody around you – and especially on a shoot or any creative or artistic venture – it inevitably becomes a reflection of yourself.

'Growing up in a post-Soviet country, we literally had to buy magazines on the black market if we wanted to find out what was happening.'

Demna, you mentioned earlier the notion of product. What were the first products you were thinking about when you first arrived at Balenciaga?
Demna: The first thing I thought was Balenciaga is a house that should make clothes that women, and men, *want* to wear, that are desirable as products. I'm talking specifically about clothes that we put on our body, and not simply shoes and bags. That's the priority in my creative approach here: I want to bring it to the point where people really want to have these clothes; I want them to be desired and relevant and speak to people. So I started this season by making a very dry, A4-length list of clothing – a pea coat, a double-breasted coat, and all that – because that's the skeleton of it.

From there, you set about creating a reality.
Demna: Yes, so I said to myself, 'How do I make a pea coat for Balenciaga in 2016?' Compiling the listing of garments is only one percent of the process; the other 99 percent is cutting things and working on shapes, because mine is a very architectural approach in terms of the construction of the clothing. The concept of each garment is a 3D approach for me; I need to find something new in the process for it to be credible as a Balenciaga product today.

When you consider Cristóbal Balenciaga's own work, do you feel that this idea of sculpture and the architecture of the garments to be key for you, too?
Demna: It was one of the key ideas, yes. But it is also the way in general that I work – with volumes and shapes, and sculpting the clothes onto the body, because that is what interests me in fashion and design. That's why I think I found a good match here at Balenciaga.
Lionel: Through your work and the collection you're showing tomorrow, you've made me realize something. For a long time, I was trying to pinpoint why Balenciaga was such a legend. If you think about Cristóbal in his time, he was doing couture but he was not the only one. So on one side you have Christian Dior who developed a very couture silhouette and a couture way to wear it, because of the corsetry inside, so the silhouette was also the way to wear it. And then on the other side you have Gabrielle Chanel who was less couture and more sportswear, and the way that people wore Chanel was freer and more comfortable. And Cristóbal was right in the middle – a couture silhouette, but a totally sportswear way of wearing it. You've made me realize this, Demna. And that is why Christian Dior and Chanel considered Cristóbal superior to them. How to keep a couture silhouette, but still be able to have a modern attitude in it…
Demna: You have to be able to move in the clothes, be able to drive a car in them, and so on, but the other important element, in terms of architecture and working around the silhouette, is the attitude. I mean, that is very present when I work on my own label, and here at Balenciaga the challenge for me was to discover that kind of refined couture attitude – a couture in today's terms. Sure, couture can be beautiful embroidery but that's not interesting to me; it just doesn't excite me. The attitude is what makes it couture, and that is what we really tried to put into the construction of the garments. So even if you are a ballet dancer, when you put that coat on it's going to give you that attitude.

Mark once said in an interview, 'When I take pictures, a lot of things happen by surprise'. Demna, what things have surprised you since you started working at Balenciaga?
Demna: What really surprises me is that we have been ready for the show since four days ago; I thought we'd be designing the collection right up to the last minute.

'The first thing I thought was Balenciaga is a house that should make clothes that women, and men, want to wear, that are desirable as products.'

That surprised me, too. When you asked for this interview to take place the night before your first ever show for the house, I almost e-mailed back to say, 'Are you sure?'
Lionel: I've been working for 30 years in fashion and I have never seen this. But that maybe says a lot about fashion right now. You know, that whole last-minute diva chaos of working all night long has always been the norm for so long – we've just accepted it's that way – but I sense the new generation doesn't want to be like this anymore. They don't want to get into this industry for that old cliché; they come for other reasons.

Lionel, what was it about Demna that appealed to you and Balenciaga?
Lionel: We obviously loved his work at Vetements and we love his personality,

but above all, we sensed that there was a real feeling between his work and what we know about Balenciaga. More like spiritual connections, the way he is acting and doing his work, not the clothes, but the *way* Demna is working. That was the key. Sure, I know some people might say, 'Oh yeah, you're just taking the trendy guy from the trendy brand', but every big house has been 'trendy' at some point. I mean, in 1947 the New Look collection at Dior was the trendy thing, and when Gabrielle Chanel came back in 1954[6] she was the trendy house of the moment. But I have the feeling that this is something bigger than trends. There is something deeper.

Demna, what do you now know about Cristóbal Balenciaga that you didn't before arriving here?

Mark: I am truly pleasantly surprised how relevant it is. I arrived here last Saturday and we did a series of photographs together on Sunday and it was the first view that I had of three or four pieces from the collection, and they really explained aesthetically an idea of the collection itself. If you put those together in the streets, they create something that is exceedingly contemporary in a very couture aesthetic without it being couture itself. And that encourages another way of looking at clothing itself and of looking at the way that people are dressing today. I think we are at a really interesting time today – kids are suddenly dressing up again, the same way as when I was a kid! Not because they're trying to repeat punk or New Romanticism, but because everyone is creating their own identity again.

Demna: The attitude! Maybe that aggression and this couture attitude I was referring to comes from seeing that grumpiness, because Paris is a tough city to live in. People don't necessarily smile here, and I think that inspires me more. I mean, when I am happy I don't really want to do things associated with fashion or work, I just want to be happy.

Now that you're working on two different brands concurrently, does that immediately inform and influence the way that you go about organizing your time?

Demna: In general, I hate time.

What, the lack of it?

Demna: Just the concept of time; I've never owned a watch in my life. Time is stress, and I am the most impatient person in the world and I want everything to happen now. I hate the notion of maintaining that rhythm of time, but I definitely have to consider that it exists in real life, the physical life that we occupy.

'I certainly learned a lot more about photography the minute I stepped out of the fashion industry; now I photograph everything I love around me.'

I was surprised by how business-minded he was. He wasn't just about making beautiful clothes, he was very business-oriented, too. I realized this when I discovered all these other cheaper lines in Spain that he was doing. I know that it was Yves Saint Laurent who invented ready-to-wear, but when you go really deep into the research of Cristóbal, you realize that it was kind of there already.

Did that influence the way you went about designing here at Balenciaga?

Demna: As I mentioned before, I make clothes to be sold and worn. There is no pretence. It has to be desired by someone, bought and worn to death. That would be the best compliment to me.

Mark, what has surprised you about this project so far?

Why do you think that is?

Mark: Out of a sense of boredom, because there is very little out there, so why not just be creative with what you have? You can do anything again all of a sudden. There are no rules; there is no one saying you have to dress like this.

Demna, is it important for you that your collections for Balenciaga help women stand out?

Demna: Not necessarily to stand out, but to feel different and feel better when they wear those clothes. I mean, I get inspired by the most normal things you see on the street: a T-shirt can inspire me far more than the drape of a beautiful dress.

What do you see on the streets of Paris that really inspires you?

Do you consciously take time off from work?

Demna: I can only have a certain amount of time working here, a certain amount of time there, but I also make sure I have a certain amount of time of me not working. Meaning I try not to work weekends, for example. I try not to do anything related to fashion at the weekend: just see my friends, watch movies, eat pizza, cook and to do things that actually feed you as a person. Otherwise you just become a robot checking the time, and that is

destructive for anyone. Working in fashion, there is always a schedule and time constraints, and while I know I need to consider these things, they are not my priority. That is why I don't wear a watch.

Still, you managed to complete the collection with four days to go.

Demna: After this interview I'm off to the ateliers, to celebrate with the team as they finish the retouching of all the looks for tomorrow, which is unprecedented for them. They are all so confident; they can't believe it. They are getting stressed because there is no stress!

People often focus on the dynamic of Vetements as a collective, how you've surrounded yourself with people very close to you and just this whole idea of the shared creative experience. How has that influenced the work and the process here at Balenciaga?

Demna: Well, the first thing I asked for before I arrived here, was to move all the designers onto the same floor because it used to be very separated and there was no exchange. But the exchange is what makes the final result of the work so objective, because we talk, we question, 'Do you like it?' 'No I don't.' 'Why?' We have arguments; we discuss everything. And the talking influences the final result – the product. It actually speaks to a wider range of people because it doesn't come from just one vision; it comes from an exchange. I think that is really crucial.

As for you Mark, the notion of family and friends seems extremely important in your work; over the years you've formed close working relationships with your subjects, such as Chloë Sevigny, Stella Tennant, Cat Power[7], and now you're working and collaborating with your own children. Tell me about that shared experience.

Mark: Well, I certainly learned a hell of a lot more about photography the minute I stepped out of the fashion industry; my photographs have become a daily practice, and I am photographing everything I love around me. So it becomes a reflection of myself, my family and all my friends, and everything that just happens. And I learn so much from listening to the photographs and seeing where they were leading me, rather than having any kind of aesthetic control over them.

Freeing control makes better results.

Mark: It's always been about trying to encourage the mistake, especially with photography.

Give me an example of that.

Mark: There was a certain time that I remember when my son was young and I would walk him to school every day; it was so much more fun to go on this adventure with him and not necessarily get to school on time because that really didn't matter, it was just about having time with him. We had this period of 30 or 40 minutes where the two of us could just have an experience and that experience was reflected in the photographs I took. But it got to a point where I realized I had to stop myself, because I was shooting two to three rolls of film every day just on the way to school. So I limited myself to taking one single picture on the way to school, and one on the way back, but those pictures had to be something I had never done before. I started looking at things in a different way and tried to encourage the camera to capture that difference – looking at my son in a different way or the light or the streets. All of a sudden, in among all the other pictures I was taking, there would be a random picture and I would look at it and think, Where did that come from? And it's that unknown territory that kind of alarmed me and was quite sophisticated, and that encouraged me again to see things in a different way.

Demna: He is so lucky your son; my father always said we had to be on time!

1. Demna is a designer and spokesman for Vetements, the design collective where he collaborates with six other designers who prefer to remain anonymous.

2. Off-White c/o Virgil Abloh was founded by Virgil Abloh, a DJ and designer who has also worked as director of creative projects at DONDA, Kanye West's 'content, experience and product company'. The self-described 'fashion label rooted in current culture at a taste level particular to now' was, like Vetements, nominated for the 2015 LVMH Prize for Young Fashion Designers.

3. The images were collected in a book, *Social Documentaries Amid This Pist*, published by onestar press in 2002.

4. In the 1960s, the three kilometres of King's Road were at the heart of 'Swinging London' and home to labels such as Mary Quant and attractions such as the celebrated Chelsea Drugstore (namechecked in the Rolling Stones' 'You Can't Always Get What You Want'). The road later became ground zero for punk after Malcolm McLaren opened SEX at number 430, which later became Seditionaries. The stores' mix of bondage gear, provocatively sloganed T-shirts, and Vivienne Westwood's early designs, formed the basis of the movement's look.

5. Music and fashion movement New Romanticism might be considered as glam rock's revenge on punk. Mixing exuberant clothes and extensive use of make-up, it rejected punk's anti-fashion fashion to play instead with ideas of androgyny much as David Bowie and Marc Bolan had in the early 1970s, while adding a sense of ahistorical romanticism. New Romantic standard bearers included Culture Club (and lead singer Boy George), Visage and, in its early days, Duran Duran.

6. 'Coco' Chanel closed her label when war broke out in 1939, resulting in 4,000 redundancies, not reopening until 1954, by which time she was aged 71.

7. Borthwick's photographs were featured on the sleeve of *You Are Free*, the sixth album by Cat Power, a.k.a., Chan Marshall. The pair then made *Speaking For Trees*, a two-hour film of Marshall singing *Free* and a selection of cover versions in a wood in upstate New York.

‘The past lives on.’

This season’s trip back to the future.

By Alexander Fury
Photographs by Zoe Ghertner
Styling by Jodie Barnes

Leather and silk cream trompe-l’oeil leg-of-mutton sleeve top by J.W.Anderson

White pleated ruffle dress by Louis Vuitton
Black croc flat-toed lace-up ankle boots from John Moore at The Old Curiosity Shop
White pearl-drop earring by Aurélie Bidermann

Yellow floral-print silk dress by Vetements
Black leather rocking-horse boots by Vivienne Westwood from Resurrection
White pearl-drop earring by Aurélie Bidermann

All clothes by Vivienne Westwood

White pleated miniskirt with hip bustle by Julien David
Chiffon frilled top with tassels by Chloé

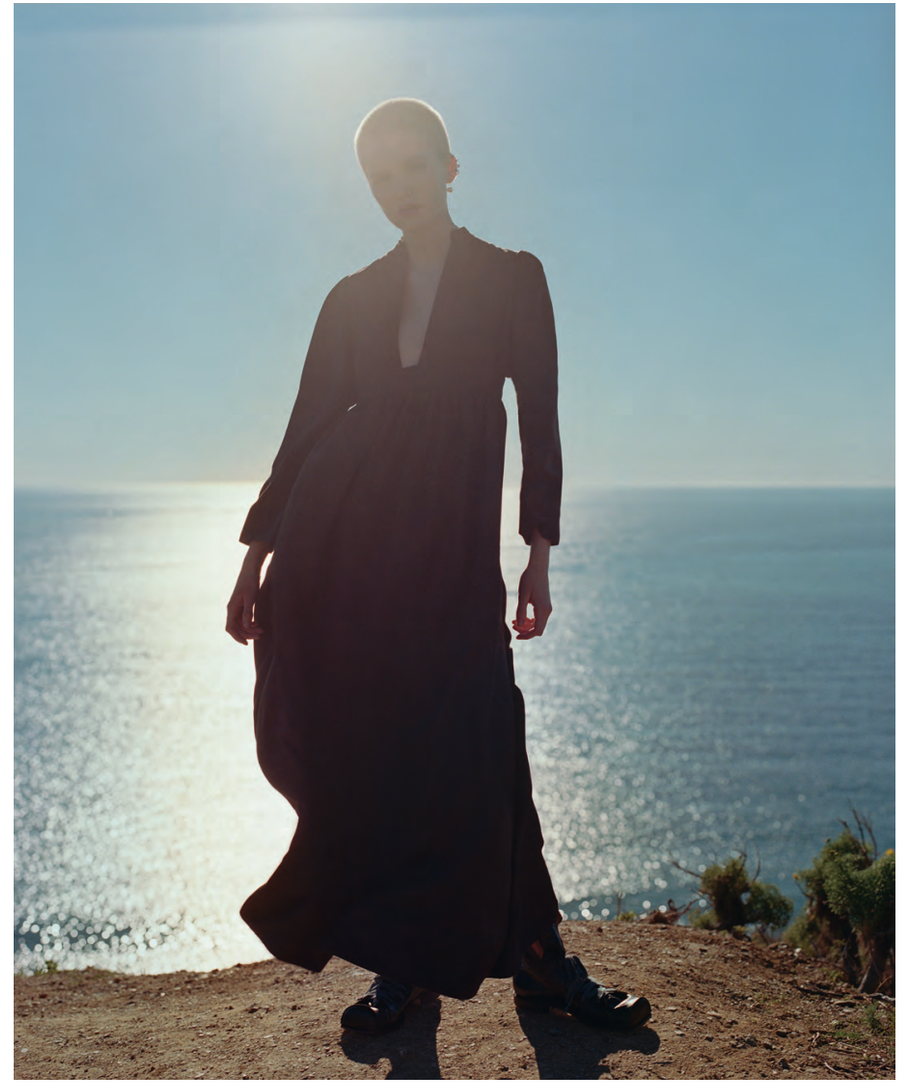
Freshwater-cultured pearl necklace from Ziegfeld Collection by Tiffany & Co.
Cream button-front smock dress by Lemaire

Black cotton puff-sleeve top by Céline
Black pleated skirt with hip bustle by Julien David
Black croc flat-toed lace-up ankle boots from John Moore at The Old Curiosity Shop
White pearl-drop earring by Aurélie Bidermann

Cream button-front smock dress by Lemaire
Freshwater-cultured pearl necklace from Ziegfeld Collection by Tiffany & Co.

White cotton smock top and wide-legged cotton trousers by The Row
Black leather rocking-horse boots by Vivienne Westwood from Resurrection
White pearl-drop earring by Aurélie Bidermann

White linen all-in-one shorts and trousers by Hussein Chalayan
Black croc flat-toed lace-up ankle boots from John Moore at The Old Curiosity Shop



Long-sleeved brown dress by Valentino
Black croc flat-toed lace-up ankle boots from John Moore at The Old Curiosity Shop
Cuff earring by Repossi

White plastic rouched elasticated top by MM6 Maison Margiela
White pearl-drop earring by Aurélie Bidermann

Model: Ruth Bell c/o The Society Management. Make-up: Fara Homidi. Photographer's Assistant: Katelyn Reeves. Stylist's Assistants: Giulio Ventrici, Joe-Anne Porritt, Cari Nelson. Manicure: Alexandra Jachno.

In the early 1980s, Italian designer Gianni Versace came across a German aeronautic technique that created a pliant metallic mesh[1]. He used it to make a series of simple, sensuous draped garments, which sold well, especially in America. In Versace's boutiques in Miami, Scottsdale and Rodeo Drive, more metallic mesh clothing was sold than the rest of the collection put together. It outfitted women like historical heroines, in chainmail like that worn by medieval knights. Fashion allowed those American women to buy into a fantasy past, to discover it anew, to relive it. It's a bit like cosplay[2], or those renaissance fairs that are, again, very popular in the United States, where check-out clerks and middle management can dress as swooning damsels and dashing troubadours, and check out from daily life. Escape.

Is that, perhaps, the same route high fashion is taking? Escaping its present by borrowing from history? If so, that's nothing new: most styles in fashion can be traced backwards easily. Shoulder pads emulate the 1980s, in turn inspired by the 1930s. Platform shoes recall the 1970s, themselves reminiscent of the 1940s. Bias-cutting is 1920s, via 1990s, diverted through the 1960s. Even the future – sci-fi, plastic fantastic, optic white go-go booted – is founded in a vision dreamed up by André Courrèges and Pierre Cardin in 1965 and intermittently revived ever since. Nothing is new; everything has been done before.

To fashion the past isn't dead. It is a commodity. The past is acquired by fashion, loaded with symbolic value.

The difference, now, is that the roundabout of revival of more recent revivals has, seemingly, burned itself out. Designers are now plunging further afield, ransacking more distant history, to create garments that, ironically, feel fresh and different. That difference comes from distance, rather than innovation. Memory is fleeting – fleeting enough to forget the true origin of corseting of a Tudor décolletage or the heft of a 19th-century gigot sleeve[3], and to register them as something new, and hence something appealing. That's all part of the chimera of fashion.

Is it worth padding through fashion's recent revivals? There have been the medieval styles of Raf Simons' final Dior haute-couture collection; J.W.Anderson's leg-of-mutton shoulders; smocked tunics like Middle Ages peasants at Lemaire and The Row; 19th-century divorce corsets[4] recalled in boned bodices at Céline. None are the obvious, theatrical flourishes we've witnessed of the past, when Galliano, Westwood and McQueen resurrected panniers[5], crinolines[6], frock coats or doublets as unwearable editorial statements. Rather, they're subtle digs into history. Unearthing something old, trying to make it look new. Succeeding.

Fashion's narcissism knows no bounds. It is fixated on its own sartorial reflection, forever flicking through past images of itself, and thinking, 'Didn't I look great?' Nevertheless, to fashion the past isn't a dead, archived image, something held at a remove. It is a commodity. The past is acquired by fashion, loaded with symbolic value.

Anyway, those were the thoughts of the Marxist theorist Walter Benjamin[7]. He was obsessed with fashion – specifically with fashion's 'sartorial quotes' of its own history, its perpetual use of its own past to create its own future. Benjamin saw that, philosophically, as fusing the eternal (history) with the ephemeral (contemporary fashion), appearing new in contrast only with that which has ceased to be fashionable. If you read further into it, you see the roots of the styles, but on the surface, they seem different. That chimes with French postmodernist theorist Jean Baudrillard's assertion of modernity, signified by fashion, as a simulation of change, 'a dynamism of amalgamation and recycling'[8].

The gist is thus: if you were to wear a precise recreation of, say, a bustled dress of 1883, your garment would be read as fancy dress. You'd look a fool. But if a garment is quoted – mangled and mauled by the vagaries of the contemporary, accented with current vocabulary and otherwise translated – it has been alienated from its origin, and activated for the present. It becomes not costume, but fashion.

The line between the past and the present is the malleable thing. How much difference does there need to be between the precise recreation and the contemporary reimagining? Versace's slinky evening dresses were hardly about historical verisimilitude. Others, however, strive for absolute accuracy. Vivienne Westwood, for instance, has designed garments that have recreated historical clothes down to reproduction Lyon silks[9]. Even her unusual, often strikingly modern clothes are embedded in history. Westwood's dissection of archival patterns allowed her to incorporate elements of costume into her fashion – an 1890s sleeve meeting a 16th-century bodice, with a petticoat from the Second Empire. The result is a fusion, born from history but which

could never have happened any time but today.

'At the "Pirate" time, looking at history… I really tried to copy the historical garments, and I still do,' Westwood once told me. She was wearing a draped dress criss-crossed with bands of cloth, which looked a bit like something someone would wear in a nativity play. When her shop on the King's Road was renamed Seditionaries and began pioneering the hard-edged, modernist punk aesthetic, Westwood would discuss how the tartan kilts she sold were based upon ancient Greek peasant costume. 'It's the dogma of the last century that you throw away the past,' Westwood told me last year. 'But it's like telling a scientist to throw his laboratory away. If you throw it away, you get rid of all the technique. You have to go back to the past.'

The past lives on in fashion. Haute couture, often vaunted as fashion's Formula One, is grounded in rules determined 70 years ago, bears a name from the mid-19th century, and is still based on dressmaking methods that date back to Marie Antoinette. Haute couture is living, breathing history: gowns use methods passed down through generations, painstakingly sewn by hand – as if sewing machines had never even existed.

nostalgia and historical fixation that drove fashion, like Gatsby, ceaselessly into the past. Today, fashion is driven back further because so many have pillaged the recent past. To reference the 1920s recalls, for many, not the original, but fashion's recent simulacrums – the Technicolor jazz age of Miuccia Prada in 2011; Galliano's *garçonnes* in the 1990s. It becomes not a historical reference, but a fashion reference. Not a recollection of a distant, non-experienced past, but of a recently remembered time. Anonymity permits escape and imagination of better times and better clothes. Fashion's cannibalization of its own past means that the past is remembered not for the original period, but its subsequent reflections.

Contemporary fashion collages together details culled from differing historical sources. Vivienne Westwood's notion of studious accuracy is eschewed, in favour of vague remembrance and reference, half-recalled clothing distorted in its reiteration. The result? A Frankenstein's monster, an echo of an echo of a past that could never have existed, because it is a composite created in the present. It has a memory, too. The glass of fashion distorts and refracts images of the past: a leg-of-mutton sleeve today, for instance, is never

For many, the 1920s recall not the original, but fashion's recent simulacrums — the Technicolor jazz age of Miuccia Prada in 2011.

The women who still wear it – 800 to 2,000 worldwide – are a direct link to a grand tradition of society hostesses, celebrities and princesses. They are clad in fashion's storied past.

Perhaps that's why couture, of all forms of fashion, most frequently harks back. These dresses are created for women whose cloistered, pampered and privileged lives more closely recall those of historical figures – Madame de Pompadour[10], say, or Empress Eugénie[11] – than you or I. Their social engagements necessitate ball gowns and opera coats, suits worn once, to travel, then discarded. That kind of profligacy belongs to another time, an era when etiquette decreed 18 pairs of gloves scented with violet, hyacinth or carnation and four new pairs of shoes had to be ordered for Marie Antoinette every week, whether she wore them or not. I once saw a pale pink Christian Lacroix haute-couture evening gown hanging in the London wardrobe of couture client Daphne Guinness. It was corseted, bustled and spangled, like something from a James Tissot painting. It was eight years old at the time. She confessed it had never been worn.

Walter Benjamin didn't live to witness the rampant revivalism that characterized fashion of the late 20th century, the

quite what it was in 1830 – nor in 1890, when the style was revived. It was revived in the 1940s, too, as well as the 1980s. Today, that single sleeve bears the traces of all of those antecedents. It's a loaded aesthetic statement, ready to be interpreted in a multitude of ways.

Voyaging into a distant, distorted and indistinctly remembered past can render something new, however. New in that the garments themselves – relics of court costume rather than past fashion – cannot be replicated and regurgitated as easy fashion propositions. For starters, there aren't many of them around to copy, certainly not to rip apart and slavishly trace line for line. Plenty of fashion repeats rather than reinterprets, using an actual garment as a template for a cookie-cutter copy of, say, an Ossie Clark 1960s dress, a Balenciaga mid-century coat, or even the obscure, like army fatigues or Americana denim. Stores like Los Angeles outpost Decades or London's Vintage Showroom, Rellik and William Vintage, do a swift trade with designer brands, which often rent the garments for a weekly or daily fee, to photograph them on models, examine techniques, lift details. One fashion consultant, who prefers to remain anonymous, told me of going to a vintage warehouse in the English countryside and finding racks of archive garments bearing paper labels of major fashion houses. Those were the last 'borrowers' – and the labels warned other fashion houses that these were used goods, for that season at least.

To avoid potential duplication of the duplication – or to prevent others from knowing what has been referenced – some labels purchase the garments, keeping them for reference (and to prevent others from being similarly inspired) or cutting them apart to copy the pattern stitch for stitch. That can be done without destroying the original – 'pin-through' copying (literally pinning out a garment through the construction lines onto pattern paper) can trace the blueprint of a garment without the need to unpick the seams. However, cutting apart a vintage piece has an added 'benefit' – it erases the evidence of how close a copy may be to the original. According to industry lore – word of mouth from vintage dealer to vintage dealer, with the ring of truth – copied garments are burned by some designers to cover their tracks, leaving only their newly manufactured counterfeit. Which, in a Baudrillardian twist, then becomes the original.

Older history requires further exploration, and modernization. A dress from the 1960s can still be worn, a crinoline or a farthingale less easily. Ironically, the further back you go, the newer the clothes wind up looking, reinterpreted in modern proportions, modern fabrics, cross-bred with contemporary garments. A boned Renaissance bodice becomes a cotton shirt; a voluminous ball gown's sleeves define the shoulders of a jacket. It requires more work to make these sartorial quotes feel contemporaneous, to pull them out of fashion's dressing-up box, and make them seem relevant, and exciting, and new.

Fashion's trip backwards is ultimately moving it forwards. It's indicative of creative grappling with complex notions of modernity, of tackling the challenge to challenge, to excite, to engage. Pulling apart history to make it, rather than rerun a few old classics. Something old begets something new.

1. Versace's official website claims this chainmail-like metal material, called Oroton, was 'invented by Versace' in 1982. Australian accessories label Oroton appears to disagree: its official website says that *it* first imagined an alternative use for the material back in the 1950s. 'Previously thought of as a solely utilitarian material,' it states, 'the metallic mesh, which was discovered in an industrial safety glove factory in Germany, was cleverly recast as a fashion must-have item by the young company.'

2. Cosplay, a portmanteau of 'costume' and 'play', is a subculture in which 'cosplayers', mainly adults, dress up as fictional characters. The word cosplay (or *kosupure* in Japanese) first appeared in print in the June 1983 issue of *My Animé* magazine, in an article written by Nobuyuki Takahashi about that year's Comic Market or Comiket.

3. *Gigot*, the French word for the back leg of a lamb, sheep or deer, is used to describe a type of sleeve particularly popular in the late 1820s and early 1830s: full and loose around the upper arm before tapering dramatically at the elbow and fitting closely on the lower arm. Some versions required whalebone strips to keep the top half 'puffed up', and were so large and impractical that they became known as 'imbecile sleeves'.

4. Divorce corsets were first introduced in 1816. Their name comes from the fact that, like an early bra, they separated the breasts, often by using a piece of metal placed in the front. They were also known as Armenian corsets.

5. Panniers were undergarments with structures that extended women's skirts out at the sides, like the baskets used to carry goods on pack animals, and were first popularized at the Spanish court in the mid-17th century. They can be seen in a number of paintings by Diego Velázquez, such as the 1659 portrait, *Infanta Margarita Teresa in a Blue Dress*.

6. The French word *crinoline* originally meant horsehair cloth, but by the 1850s in English referred to a stiffened or hooped petticoat that supported a woman's skirt. A revolutionary crinoline was introduced to Britain in 1856, when R.C. Milliet of Besançon, France, and his partner C. Amet, deposed British patent number 1729 for a 'skeleton petticoat made of steel springs fastened to tape'. It was an immediate success: the pair made £10,000 in just five weeks, the equivalent of £968,000 ($1.4 million) today. Unfortunately, crinolines were highly flammable. The most infamous incident took place on December 8, 1863, when 2,000 women were burned to death in the cathedral in Santiago, Chile, because, as Alison Gernsheim writes, 'the vast quantities of inflammable material in their dresses fed the flames'.

7. Marxist philosopher and cultural theorist Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) is today perhaps best known for *The Arcades Project*, his unfinished (and perhaps unfinishable) examination of Paris as the capital of 19th-century modernity, as well as his 1936 essay, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. German-born Benjamin moved to France in 1932, but fled Paris in June 1940, the day before the city fell to Nazi forces. He killed himself in Spain on September 25, 1940, in the mistaken belief that the authorities were going to return him to France.

8. Sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) was part of the generation of French intellectuals including Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida whose work has enlightened and infuriated students and thinkers in equal measure for decades. Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality or an inability to differentiate reality from simulations of reality, first postulated in his 1981 book *Simulacra and Simulation*, continues to be highly influential.

9. At its peak in the 1780s, Lyon was the capital of European silk production. The trade was almost completely destroyed during fighting in the years following the French Revolution.

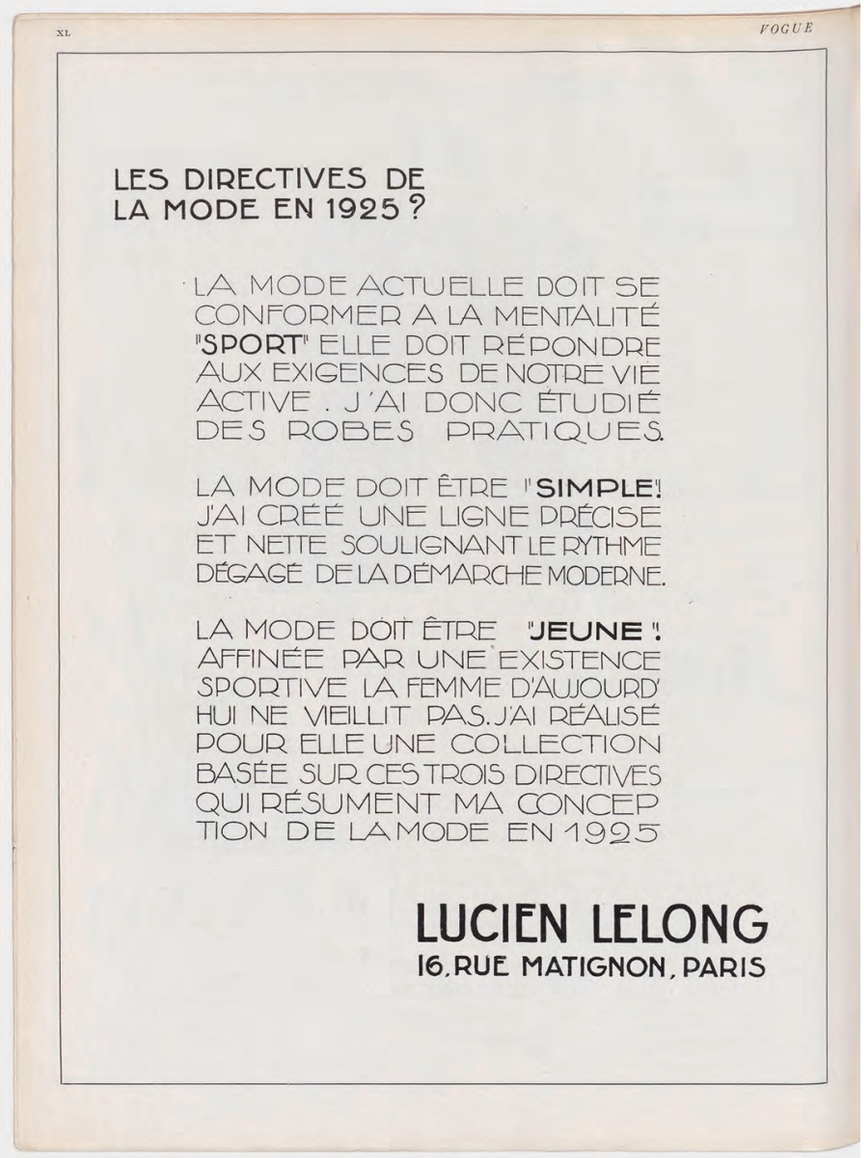
10. Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour (1721-1764), or Madame de Pompadour, is perhaps today better known for the hairstyle that took her name and was so beloved of Elvis Presley. In her own time, she was renowned for her patronage of key Enlightenment figures, such as Voltaire, and for being the mistress of King Louis XV.

11. Empress Eugénie was born Doña María Eugenia Ignacia Augustina de Palafox-Portocarrero de Guzmán y Kirkpatrick, 16th Countess of Teba and 15th Marchioness of Ardales. She married French emperor Napoleon III in 1853 and became a patron of the arts and one of the earliest supporters of haute couture. After the fall of the Second Empire in 1870, Eugénie escaped Paris with the help of her American dentist, going into exile in southern England where she died aged 94 in 1920.

‘Text gave fashion philosophy.’

Lucien Lelong – and when fashion campaigns used words to seduce.

Curated by Olivier Saillard



June 1925

'Current fashion should conform to the "sporting" mentality: it should respond to the requirements of our active life,' wrote designer Lucien Lelong in 'Fashion Directives for 1925', an advertisement for his couture house that appeared in *Vogue* Paris that same year. Today largely forgotten, Lelong was one of the leading couturiers of his day, a designer whose house employed 1,200 at its height, as well as the man who, as head of the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Parisienne, negotiated with the Nazi occupiers to stop the Parisian couture industry being moved to Berlin and Vienna[1].

He was also an advertising innovator. At the time, says Olivier Saillard, fashion historian and director of the Musée Galliera in Paris, 'fashion houses wanted to sell a spirit; they didn't promote the couturier's style'. So their advertisements all had the same goal. 'They promoted the house and the address where customers could come and have their fittings, and watch a private presentation of the collections,' explains Saillard. 'The ads in the magazines weren't written to seduce but to confirm – they weren't about selling product.' As can be seen in the following pages, Lucien Lelong wasn't afraid to try to seduce with words. The texts he wrote for his advertisements, often in the first person, went beyond simple statements of fact and became proclamations of belief. They were like brief fashion manifestos laying out his vision each season, sometimes art-directed[2] using the latest typographic styles and mise-en-page. They aimed to educate and influence customers and give them an ethos as much as the address where they could buy into it. They were about leading fashion, directing it by promising garments that would help women live better. As Lelong wrote in one, fashion 'should respond to the requirements of our active life'.

'In a strikingly contemporary way, Lelong was more than just a simple designer, he was a true artistic director,' says Saillard. 'He didn't think that he should only be designing dresses, so he employed assistant couturiers.' Among whom were Pierre Balmain and Christian Dior. 'If Dior became the artistic director he did,' says Saillard, 'then one reason was Lelong – and Dior acknowledged as much.' And one way that Dior continued Lelong's legacy was his use of text: he would write the press releases for his collections, sometimes with the help of French novelist Colette. 'Dior not only uses the first person to explain each dress, but also each collection's overall concept,' says Saillard. 'What is charming with him is that the language is not "fashion" but atelier language. It is all about the craft.'

Saillard says that text in fashion advertising had almost completely disappeared by the end of the 1950s, firstly replaced by illustrations of products, then by photographs, for which improved technology had reduced printing costs. Despite the obvious reasons why images have come to rule the contemporary fashion landscape, Saillard regrets the abandonment of language as a fashion tool. 'Your relationship with what you're doing changes when you have to pick up a pen to explain it,' he believes. 'For people interested in fashion, from customers to historians, it is fascinating to read how the work is thought out. Those texts gave fashion philosophy'.

1. Born in 1889, Lucien Lelong took over his family's couture house in 1918 and quickly grew the business. In 1927 he married Nathalie Paley, a Romanov princess and socialite. During the war he convinced the occupying authorities that it would be impossible to move across Europe all the smaller ateliers so vital to haute couture. This earned him a charge of collaboration after the war, of which he was acquitted in 1945. He closed his couture house in 1948 and died of a heart attack in 1958.

2. Two of the following images (pages 219 and 223) were art-directed by Marc Réal, who, in a 1927 advertisement for Dorland, the agency where he worked, is described thus: 'Marc Réal runs the art department at Dorland. He has placed his culture, his talent, his enthusiasm in the service of advertising. Modern builders have abandoned embellishments on facades to construct, with new materials, buildings adapted to a real need. Marc Réal is the architect of his pages of advertisements, his brochures, his leaflets. Each medium is built with a goal, the goal that you wish to attain. All bear his trademark: an advertisement that resembles no other. A new claim: "A DORLAND ADVERTISEMENT". Because Marc Réal has created a Studio. He has been able to gather around him specialized artists, working with joy in the DORLAND spirit. He organizes it. A DORLAND advertisement. The DORLAND spirit. Enthusiasm. Success, so returns!'

XLVIII

VOGUE

dans l'axe de la mode

Toutes les manifestations de la mode sont soumises à un code du bon goût - non formulé, mais réel.

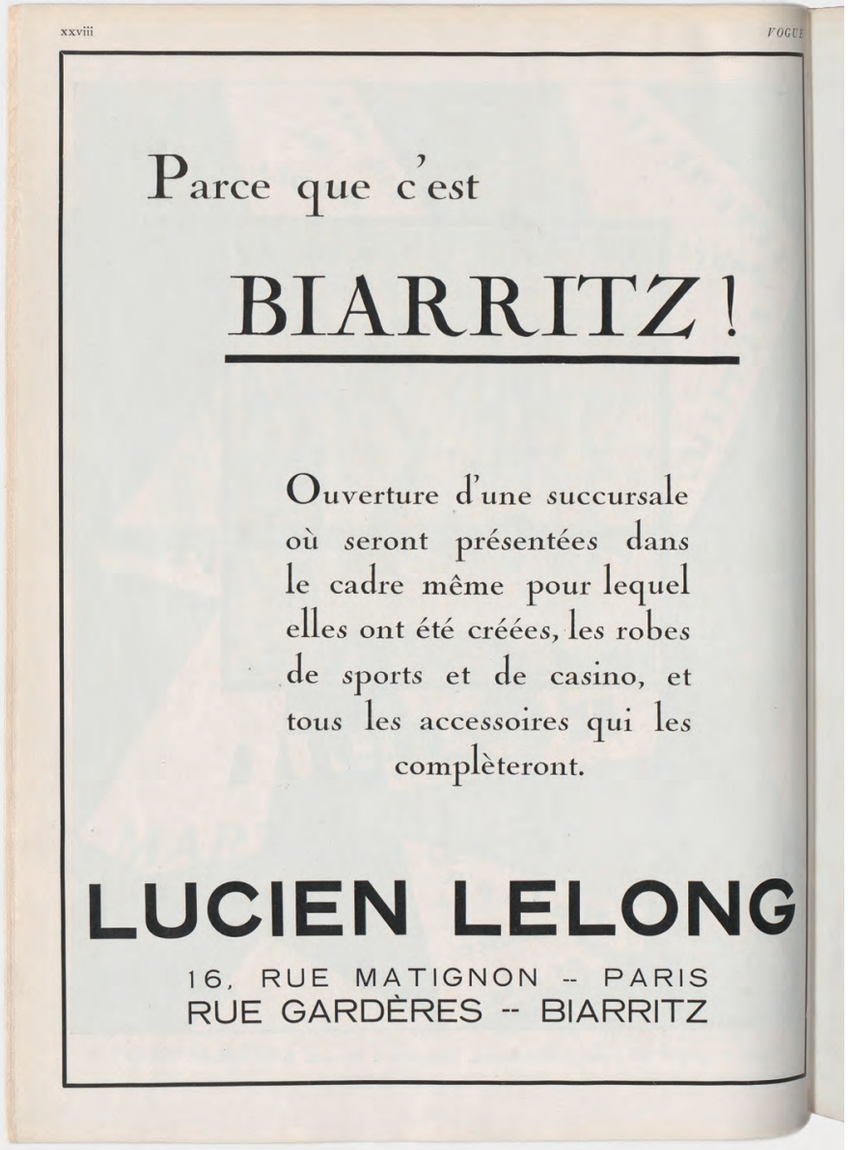
Et cependant - à chaque nouvelle saison il est créé à Paris des modèles dont l'esthétique, en désaccord avec les tendances actuelles, est désaxée.

J'estime que la couture moderne, comme l'art de nos jours, doit trouver son inspiration dans le rythme et le mouvement.

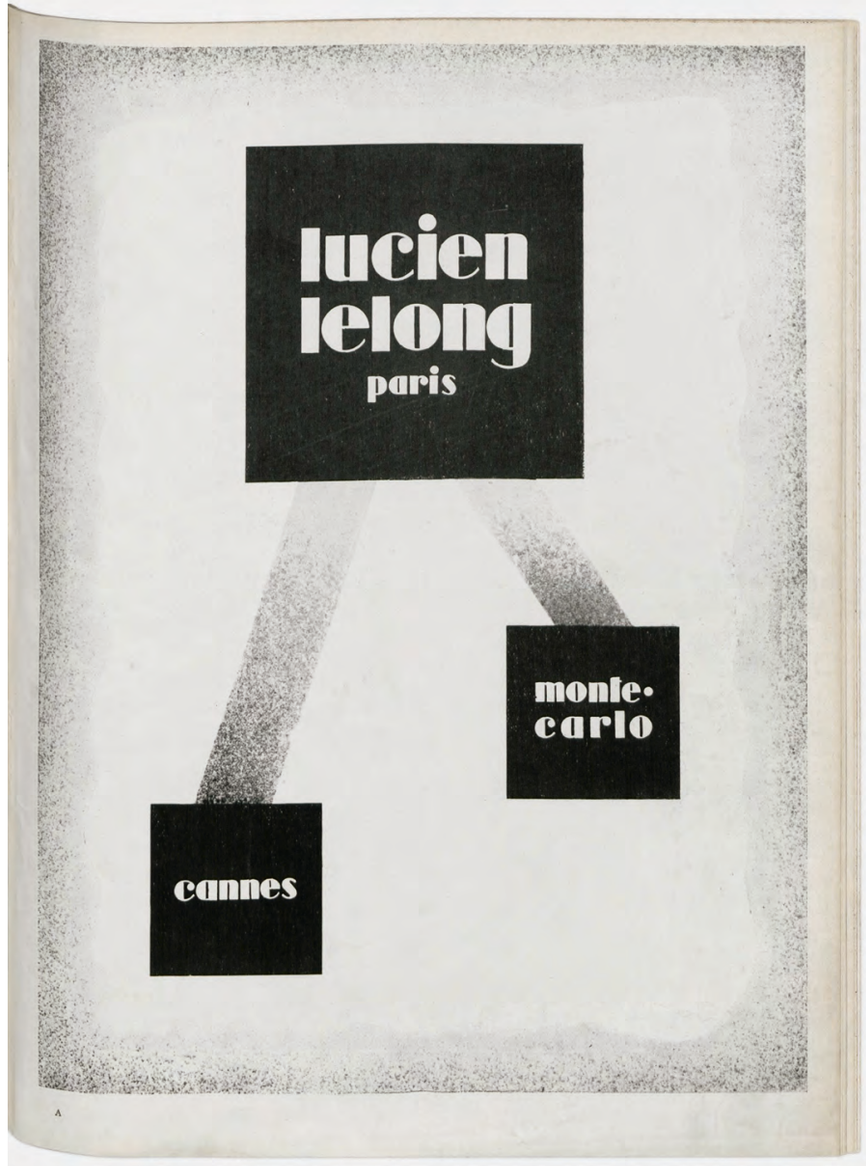
La ligne Kinétique réalise ce principe de la robe animée. Fidèle reflet de son époque elle évolue toujours dans l'axe de la mode.

lucien lelong
16, rue Matignon
Paris

June 1926



December 1925



January 1926

LELONG

Et je crois que cette étude de la ligne en mouvement que j'appelle la création cinématique, la comparant au développement d'un film au ralenti, est la seule qui permette la réalisation logique d'une robe se prêtant aux gestes de la vie moderne.

J'ai appliqué ces principes dans ma nouvelle collection et me suis efforcé avant tout de conférer à mes modèles ce dynamisme caractéristique de notre époque.

LUCIEN LELONG

ouvre une Maison
à BIARRITZ
Rue Gardères

où ses Clientes trouveront : tenues de sport, robes habillées et tous les accessoires qui les complètent.

montrée la première d'Août.

December 1925

A L'EXPOSITION DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS ...

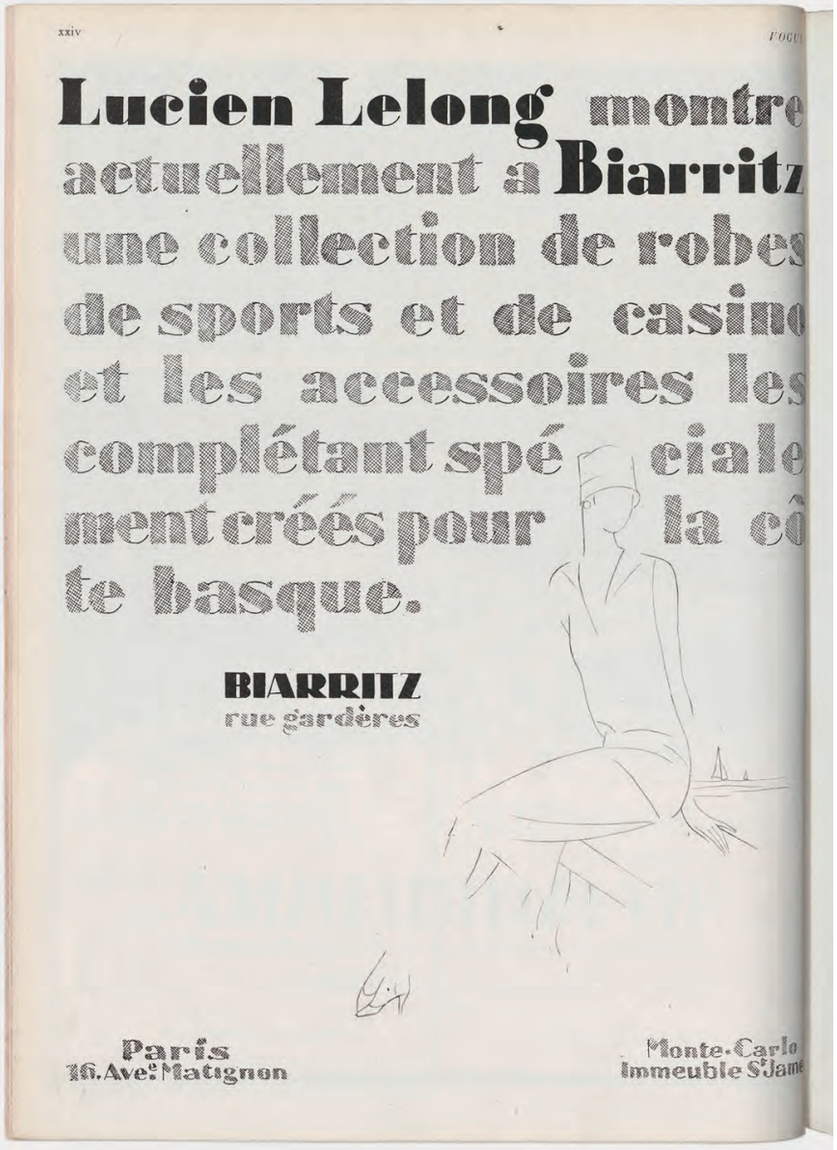
Dans une Exposition comme celle des Arts Décoratifs les circonstances nous obligent à montrer des Créations sur des mannequins fixes.

Mais la véritable beauté d'une robe ne réside-t-elle pas dans son harmonieuse obéissance au rythme du mouvement?

Pour ma part, je m'efforce en créant un modèle d'en dégager par le jeu des lignes cette mobilité qui en accentue le caractère.

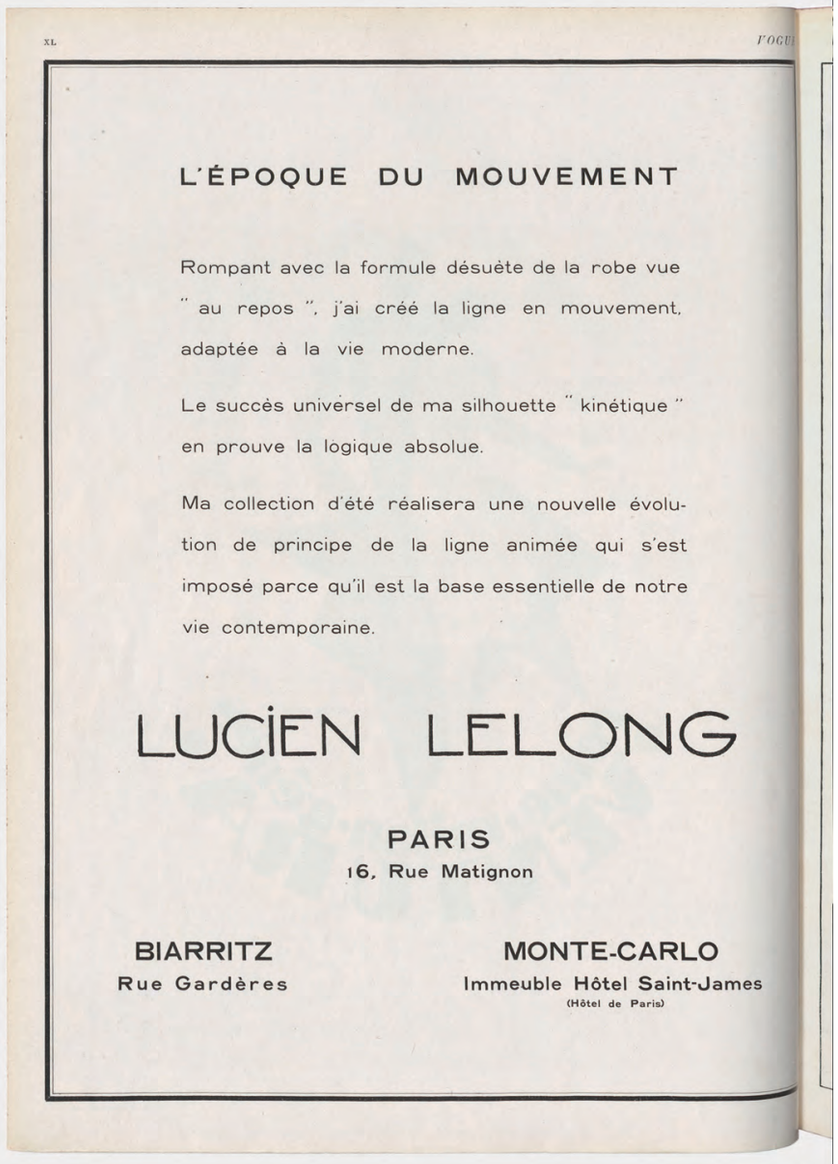
LUCIEN LELONG
16, RUE MATIGNON, PARIS

June 1925

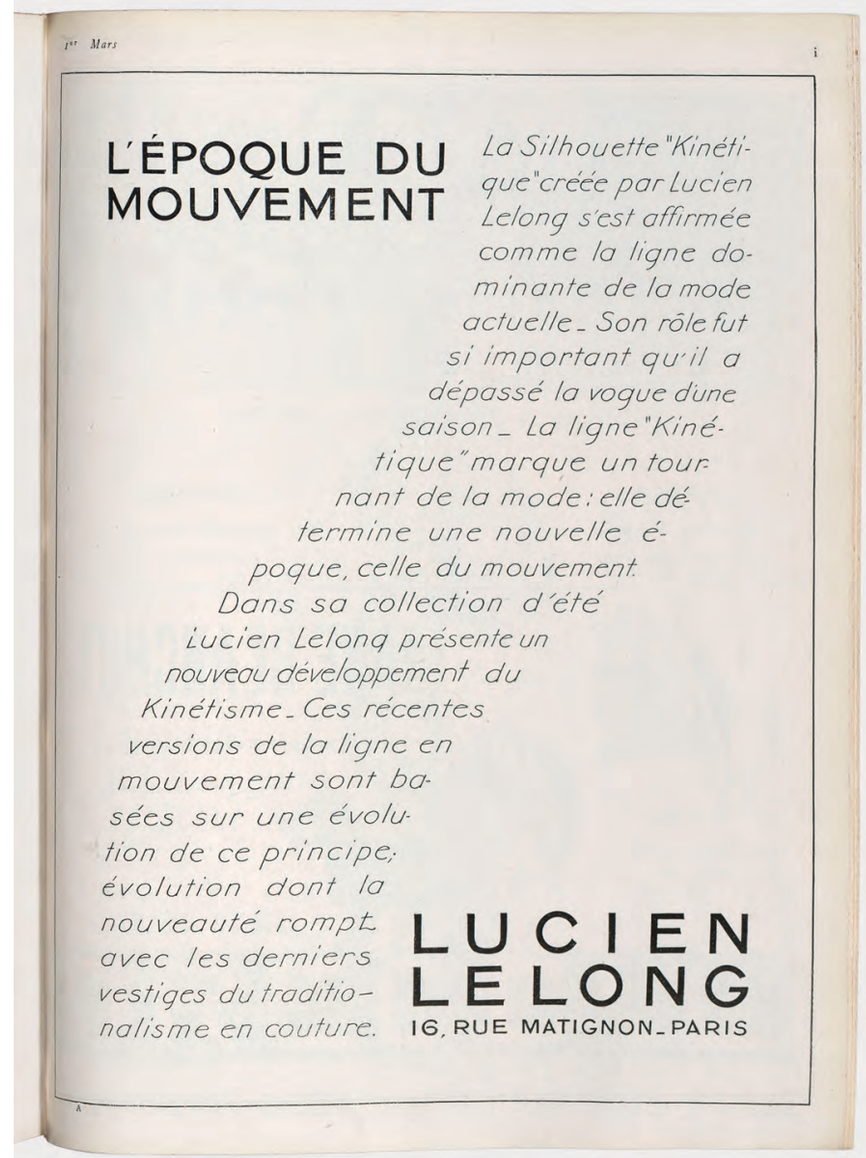


July 1928

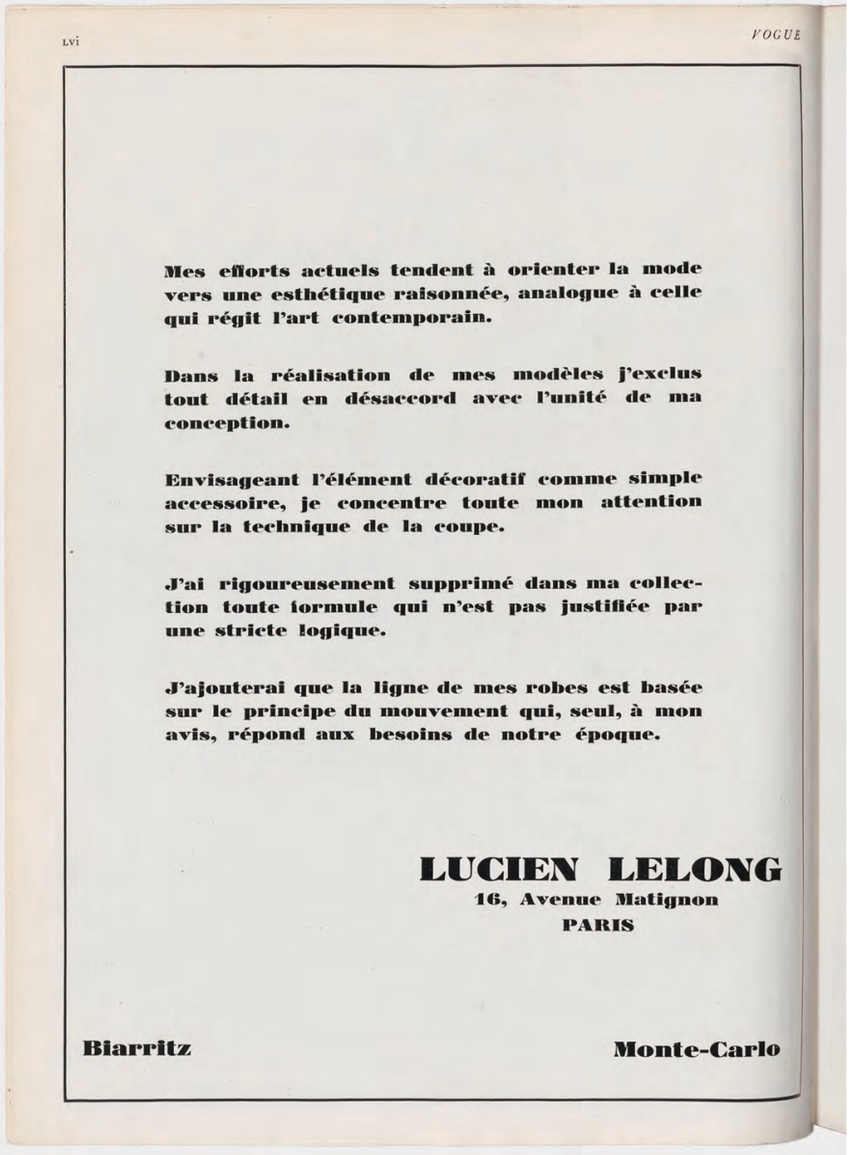
September 1928



June 1926

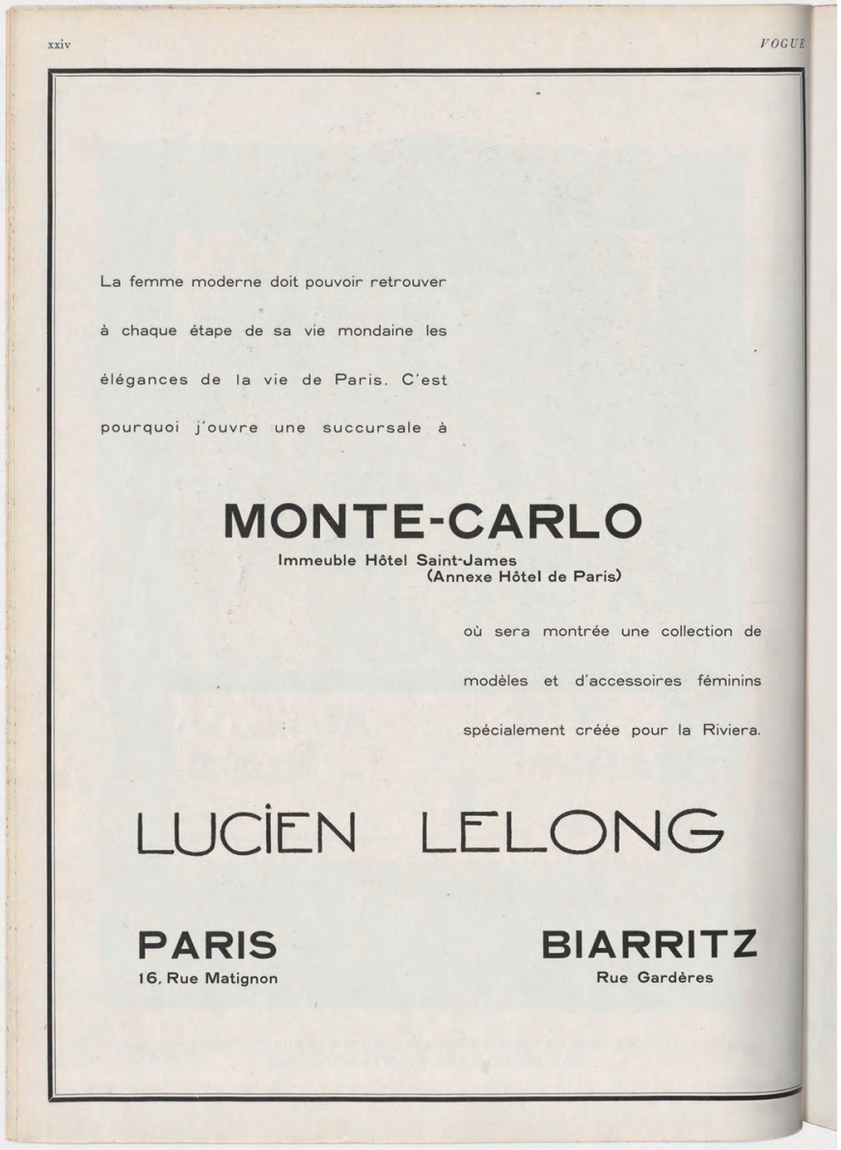


June 1926

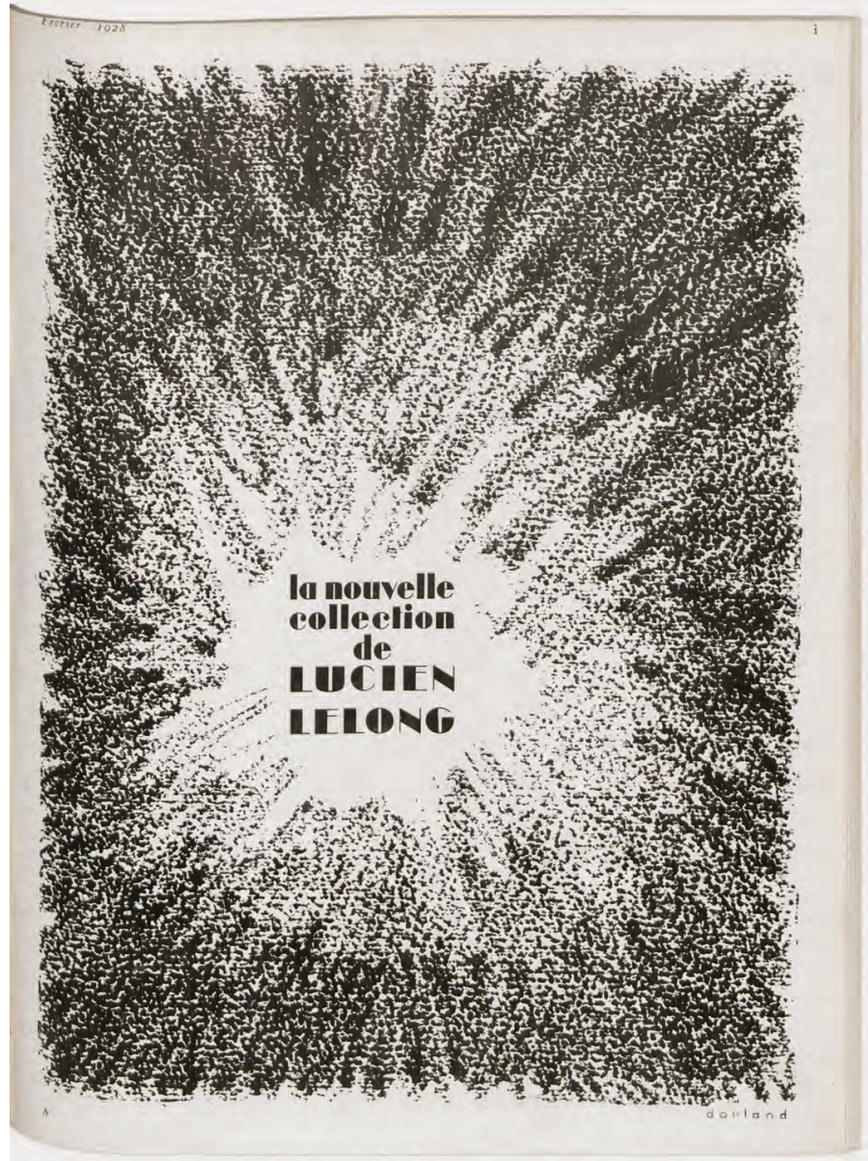


December 1926

June 1927



June 1926



February 1928

TRANSLATIONS

All the images in this portfolio originally appeared in the pages of *Vogue* Paris.

Page 211

Fashion instructions for 1925?

Current fashion should conform to the 'sporting' mentality. It should respond to the requirements of our active life. This is why I have studied practical dresses.

Fashion should be 'simple'. I have created a sleek, precise outline highlighting the carefree modern stride.

Fashion should be 'young'. Sharpened by a sporting life, today's woman doesn't age. I have made for her a collection based on these three instructions that summarize my conception of fashion in 1925.

Page 213

In the Axis of Fashion

All manifestations of fashion are subjected to a code of good taste – unformulated but real.

And yet with every new season designs are created in Paris whose aesthetic, in disharmony with current trends, is unbalanced.

I believe that modern couture, like the art of our day, must find its inspiration in rhythm and movement.

The Kinetic line realizes this principle of the animated dress. A faithful reflection of its era, it always evolves in the axis of fashion.

Page 214

Because it's Biarritz!

The opening of a branch where dresses for sport and for the casino, and the accessories that complement them are presented in the setting for which they were created.

Page 216

Lelong

And I believe that this study of the line of movement that I call cinematic creation, comparing it to the development of a film in slow-motion, is the only one that allows for the logical realization of a dress that lends itself to the gestures of modern life.

I applied these principles to my new collection and, above all, I have endeavoured to give my designs this dynamism that is so characteristic of our era.

Lucien Lelong
opens a House in Biarritz
Rue Gardères
where his clients will find:
sporting attire, evening gowns,
and the accessories to complement them
Shown on August first.

Page 217

At the Exhibition, *Les Arts Décoratifs*…

In an Exhibition like *Les Art Décoratifs*, we are obliged by circumstances to show the Creations on static mannequins.

But doesn't the true beauty of a dress reside in its harmonious obedience to the rhythm of movement?

I personally endeavour to create a design that grants this mobility through the set of lines that accentuates the character of the piece.

Page 218

Lucien Lelong is currently showing in Biarritz a collection of dresses for sport and for the casino and their complementary accessories created especially for the Basque Coast.

Page 220

The Era of Movement

Breaking with the old-fashioned formula of the dress being seen 'at rest', I have created the line in movement adapted to modern life.

The universal success of my 'kinetic' silhouette is proof of this absolute logic.

My summer collection will achieve a new evolution in the principle of the animated line, which imposed itself because it is the essential basis of our contemporary life.

Page 221

The Era of Movement

The 'Kinetic' Silhouette created by Lucien Lelong has affirmed itself as the dominant line of today's fashion. Its role is so important that it has gone beyond being in vogue for just one season. The 'Kinetic' line marks a turning point in fashion: it determines a new era, that of movement. In his summer collection, Lucien Lelong presents a new development of Kineticism. These recent versions of the line in movement are based on the evolution of this principle; an evolution whose novelty breaks from the last vestiges of traditionalism in couture.

Page 222

My current efforts tend to orientate fashion towards a reasoned aesthetic, corresponding to the one driving contemporary art.

In the realization of my designs I exclude all details that clash with the unity of my conception.

Envisaging the decorative element as a simple accessory, I place all my attention on the technique of the cut.

I have rigorously removed from my collection, all formulas that are not justified by a strict logic.

I should add that the line of my dresses is based on the principle of movement which, in my opinion, is the only one that responds to the needs of our era.

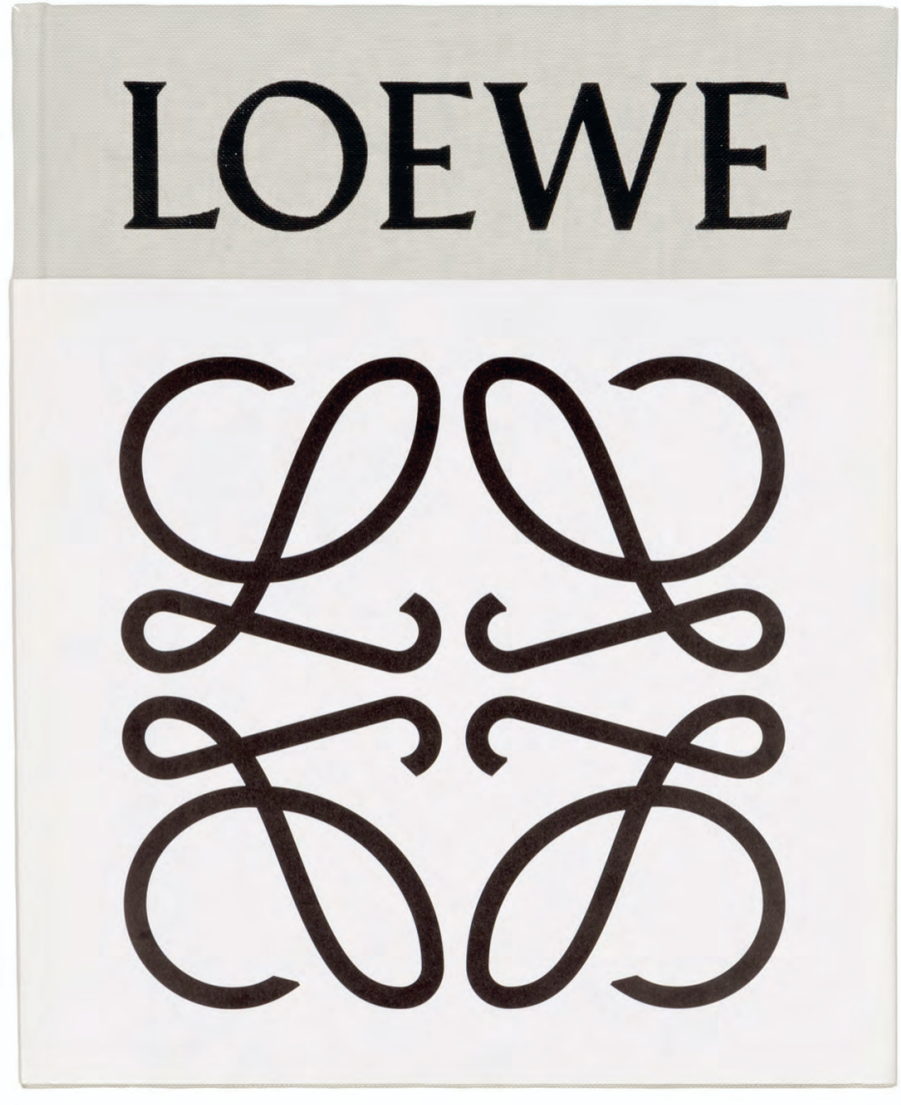
Page 224

The modern woman should be able to find at every step of her society life the elegance of Parisian life. That is why I am opening a branch in the Monte Carlo Hôtel Saint-James Building (Hôtel de Paris annexe) where a collection of women's designs and accessories created especially for the Riviera will be shown.

‘Every single aspect had to be changed.’

Jonathan Anderson and M/M (Paris) discuss the new language of Loewe.

By Emily King



Publication 1, Menswear Spring/Summer 2015

Steven Meisel, 'An Interpretation', advertising campaign 2015

Designer Jonathan Anderson first came to my attention six or so years ago. I saw a photograph of him in his studio posed next to a pile of Yohji Yamamoto catalogues[1] that had been designed by creative duo M/M (Paris) in the mid-1990s. At the time I was editing a monograph about the agency and these works were occupying a significant slice of my attention. How, I thought, has this young man come across publications that were designed while he was still a schoolboy? Following Jonathan over the years, I have often been arrested by his unerring instinct, not only in art direction, but also in the broader cultural territories of art, architecture and craft. Now with his own successful brand, J.W.Anderson, and as the creative director of luxury label Loewe, his access to a huge range of influences is no longer such a mystery, but his choices remain almost unnervingly apt.

Just as Jonathan is a long-term fan of M/M (Paris), so M/M's founders, Michael Amzalag and Mathias Augustyniak, are established fans of Jonathan. Seeking him out and entering into an ongoing conversation well before the Loewe job came up, they now work closely with him on the house's visual language. With long experience of working for fashion brands including Balenciaga, Jil Sander and Louis Vuitton, they share his belief that the success of a contemporary luxury business hinges as much on content as product and, with that in mind, have created what Michael describes as the 'Loewe channel': a stream of images for a variety of media, from in-store exhibitions to the Instagram accounts of the brand's followers.

Our conversation takes place in the Loewe offices in Paris a few days before the label's Spring/Summer 2016 fashion show.

How did you meet?
Michael Amzalag: Through the stylist Benjamin Bruno. In 2011-12 we did this magazine *Man About Town* and we started working with Benjamin, who we knew vaguely from French *Vogue*. We wanted someone of the younger generation to be in charge of the fashion – to bring something new, to use photographers we didn't know.

Where were you at that point, Jonathan?
Jonathan Anderson: I had already graduated; I'd started my business. I met Ben in a showroom and it all went from there. I got him in to work on the brand. We needed a photographer and Jamie Hawkesworth had shot my picture for *Hero* magazine, so we shot with him, and it all spiralled out of control.

Where did you first see M/M's work?
Jonathan: I was always an avid fan. I loved all the early Yohji stuff.

Those catalogues were done back in the mid 1990s, when you were still a teenager. Where did you find them?
Jonathan: I just saw them. There are not that many people who do this kind of thing at that level, you know what I mean? So when I got approached for this job…[2]

The Loewe job?
Jonathan: Yes, I knew straight away that M/M should be involved. We'd been in conversations before.

What were your first conversations about, before the Loewe job came up?
Jonathan: Just general industry shit.

Like?
Jonathan: Like, 'What am I doing?', 'Where am I heading?', 'What am I meant to do?'

And if you ask M/M that, what do they tell you?
Jonathan: There were already things in the pipeline, so these questions were just pre-empting what would happen. Then, when I did get the job, everything fell into place.
Michael: Firstly, we were curious about Jonathan's brand. I remember seeing his show before Loewe came up, and we spent some time discussing it with him. Then, when he was approached, we started having conversations about how we should do it.

'M/M were involved in every single decision right from the start. Right from the book that I made to apply for the Loewe job.'

So were M/M part of the conversation when you took on Loewe, right from the start?
Jonathan: Yes, every single decision, right from the start. Right from the book I made to apply for the job.
Mathias Augustyniak: We had been involved with many brands – Yohji Yamamoto, Jil Sander, Balenciaga – but this was the first time that we became involved right at the beginning of the process, before anything had happened. Jil Sander was an existing brand. Yohji Yamamoto was an existing brand. Balenciaga was an exercise in

Meisel Archive Autumn/Winter 2015 advertising campaign

Steven Meisel, 'Untitled (Self-portraits)', advertising campaign, 2015-2016

re-branding, but we were less involved with the re-branding than advertising the rebirth. Here, with Jonathan, because the discussions started so early, we could take a much more strategic approach. We were writing a whole strategy for how to appear in the world of fashion.

Jonathan: It was a solid commitment, that was what was so interesting.

A solid commitment on whose part?

Jonathan: From Loewe. It was a big ask from them. It didn't feel like it in the moment, but it was a big deal for us to be allowed to do something so comprehensive.

Mathias: Our first question was, 'How can this be exciting?' We had this conversation where we kind of imposed the necessity of a rebrand on you. I remember very clearly saying in the early conversations, 'You have to do this otherwise it is going to be very, very difficult to make the changes you want'.

Jonathan: A rebrand involves so many things that you would never think about, like the designs on thousands of paper bags. It was very interesting when it became a reality. We are still going through it. For example, we had a paper bag that was beige, like suede, and it isn't right to sell a leather bag in a bag that looks like it is made of leather. That was the first major problem that we had. So we came up with this white colour, which is like a smoked white.

Was it a case of sourcing a particular paper and card?

Michael: It was like a classic paper, but we created the tint.

Mathias: We wanted them to be like table boxes.

Jonathan: Like encyclopaedias.

Mathias: And books and records.

Jonathan: Everything is just beautiful. They're all objects you want to keep.

Michael: We came to the conclusion that, because this is one of the oldest luxury houses, if not *the* oldest, in the world and you have this burden of tradition to deal with, then rather than looking at it through the parameters of heritage and tradition, we should translate the idea of time into something cultural. We needed to excavate the heritage and find the moments that are relevant for us to address now. Loewe was originally a cooperative; it was never about a style; it was just a group of people working with leather as craftsmen. Then you have this German guy, Enrique Loewe Roessberg, who came in the 1870s, and gave his name to the cooperative. The first thing we saw when we visited the archives was a pile of brands – there was a new one every eight or nine years. It was very interesting to see the trajectory of the story like that. It justified our approaching it in a certain way. The previous logo was inspired by the brands used on cattle; it was designed by a Spanish painter in the 1970s[3]. We came up with a much simpler version that returned to the source.

Jonathan: It was about removing all the layers.

Michael: We said that the logo had to go back to the idea of branding the cattle and the leather, and our idea was immediately validated by the possibilities generated by the logo.

Can we rewind a bit to when you went to Jonathan's shows? What was it that struck you about what he was doing?

Michael: It was the language. It was obscure and coded, and full of contradiction. I really liked that there was this layer of 'pseudo-ing'.

That's an interesting way of putting it.

Mathias: I thought it was really exciting that it was not only style, but also content. It was a new way of approaching fashion. Instead of replaying things that were already said, Jonathan had digested what had happened before and he was expressing it in the world of fashion. For me, this was new and fresh. Jonathan's approach is global and cultural. He takes it for granted that fashion is culture, that fashion has an impact on art, and art has an impact on fashion, and that fashion has an impact on cinema. All these things are linked to one another. People at LVMH recognized that it could be good to inject this person into a brand such as Loewe, which had no image or point of view at the time.

'Rather than looking at it through the parameters of heritage and tradition, we decided to translate the idea of time into something cultural.'

I am curious about the book that Jonathan mentioned, the one he used to apply for the job?

Michael: It was a book full of images, some taken from the Yohji catalogues, others from this 1997 story by Steven Meisel that was inspired by Alex Katz[4]. For us that story was the reinvention.

And you used images from that story in the first advertising campaign. I was thinking that it must quite common to apply for a job with references from the

Advertising campaigns, Spring/Summer 2015 to Autumn/Winter 2016

past, but it is very unusual to be so honest about those references in public.
Michael: The fact that the story is a reference of a reference made it the cornerstone of this construction. It was the basis of our strategy to readdress and reconstruct Loewe.
Mathias: It was our common understanding that we could say, 'OK, my reference is this image from Steven Meisel and I am not hiding my sources'.
Michael: Rather than trying to reinterpret the images, we said, 'Let's try to get permission from Steven and then use this for the beginning of the new chapter of this brand'.
Mathias: So right away we set up this formula for the advertising where one image is from the past, a reference, one is from the present, which are the objects that are sold in the shops – the accessories and the bags – and one is the future, which is the fashion silhouette that foresees the show somehow. This was a revolution in terms of how to promote a fashion brand.
Jonathan: I'd never done a big brand before and I was living on adrenaline to get it done – I have lived on just adrenaline for the past two years. We did this thing, this drop zero, where I basically took a year out – no new products went into the stores for a year – because we were getting every single detail right. Every single aspect had to be changed, from the logo to the stores, everything. So during that process we came up with this concept where you would put the campaign on the street before the show, and then sell 25 percent of the collection from the show inside stores that day. We had to do that because we were running out of time. It wasn't a strategic decision; it was because the stores were running out of products. But then it transpired that it is the best rhythm. There is an urgency in fashion now.

There's this big debate about trying to change the rhythm of fashion now, isn't there?
Mathias: Yes, but somehow we did it through intuition. We were pushed into coming up with a solution.
Jonathan: I think it was surreal for people to see the campaign on the street before the show even happened. When you reinvent a brand, no matter how big or small it is, everyone is desperate to know what it is going to be. So, if you launch with menswear as a presentation and you create a new advertising campaign with a still life of old logos and images by Steven Meisel that were shot in 1997, people find it very disorientating.

It strikes me as very radical to use old fashion pictures for a current campaign. It transgresses fashion's guiding idea, that of newness.
Mathias: The idea is to eradicate the idea that fashion is only the future. Fashion can be a new image, or it can be an old image if it is framed in the right way. Jonathan works from that position.
Jonathan: In art it is fine to have references, but in fashion we have this preconceived idea that we have to *own* everything. I think, rather than owning something, it is important to work out what is right for the moment. Fashion is about trying to find out what silhouette, texture, bag, shoe, is right for now. It is all about how you mix it, how you articulate it. That is what fashion is now.
Michael: That is the position that attracted us to Jonathan's work. There is an understanding of context, which for a graphic designer is part of the job.

That brings to mind the way Peter Saville always talks about his designs for Joy Division and the repositioning of neo-classicism in the late 1970s[5].
Mathias: The only difference is that Peter Saville was more of a post-modernist, erasing history by shifting something to another field. What is interesting here is that Jonathan is creating a surreal collage. It is engrained in the commercial realm and it is more incremental, and more realistic.
Michael: Somehow we created a channel in the context of advertising, the Loewe channel, where, instead of mixing everything in one image, there are several images that are talking to each other.

'It was our common understanding that we could say, OK, my reference is this image from Steven Meisel and I am not hiding my sources.'

Can we have a type-geek moment? Tell me about the typeface that spells Loewe?
Michael: We chose Pegasus by Berthold Wolpe[6], because it was at the start of German modernism.

Which typeface was used before?
Michael: Bembo, the problem was it didn't communicate anything: it didn't feel English; it didn't feel Spanish; it didn't feel German. The word Loewe itself sounds weird in Spanish because it is German, and there are problems all around the world because people don't know how to pronounce it. So we decided to ground the type in the German

Publications 1 to 9, Spring/Summer 2015 to Autumn/Winter 2016

origin of the name, so at least we can restore its authority.

You redrew Pegasus a little?
Michael: Yes, Pegasus was only the starting point.

Did you make a whole alphabet of capitals?
Michael: There is an alphabet, but we restrict its use. Loewe is starting a craft prize and we are using it for the logo, but it can't be used to say something like, 'women's bathroom'.

Going back to reworking the brand logo: why did it need to be redone?
Mathias: It was too fancy, too expressive, with too much feeling. The idea was to find something that simply brands an object without giving too much taste to it. It says where it comes from, but it doesn't add any flavour. With the type and the logo, we wanted to create an identity that could encompass many different elements.
Jonathan: What really fascinates me is that you can put anything on a page below that word [Jonathan places his iPhone on a blank piece of Loewe headed paper] and you own it. When I first saw it, I was really struck by the O, which I think looks like an eye, an all-seeing eye – you hate me saying that, I know! I think you really need the O to help you pronounce the word. The O breaks it; it makes you stop. We did a whole collection covered in 'Loewe'. There was this moment when we were like, 'OK, I am now at one with it, now I feel that I am allowed to use it, that it can be everywhere'. I think that's when people started to understand where we were going.

Do you see it as yours?
Jonathan: To be very political, and what I really feel is successful about it, is that it is a very good platform for whatever this brand does after me. I think ultimately I'll feel that we have done a good job if someone else is able to step in and the brand can still continue with this logo. That is going to be the test.
Mathias: We made a print that is a compilation of all the existing marks for Loewe – a pattern made from old logos. It was another way to embrace the past without fear. It says, 'There is a new logo and maybe one day this new logo will also be part of this collection'. Instead of just saying this is mine, I want this brand to look like we are creating a space. Somehow, in that, you can hear many voices pronouncing the word.

But do they all say it a different way? Do you think that more people can pronounce Loewe now?
Mathias: We are working on this.

How is that going to happen?
Mathias: We can't tell you.

Might it be the world's most mispronounced brand?
Jonathan: Sometimes it can get incredibly frustrating, but that's the challenge. It is part of it.
Mathias: That is why the visual language is as important as the logo itself. I don't want to say that we invented the white background, but somehow we have used it to be more like a sign. And even the silhouette can look like a sign, and the images from the past are also becoming more symbolic. We were trying to implement a structure, a system, that is invisible. It has more to do with architecture than decoration; it is like an architect working in a city.
Michael: A bit like urban planning. After we had all these conversations about modernism and the German influence, which all came from intuition, Jonathan started looking into the archive and found this moment of really hard-core modernism in Loewe created by this Spanish architect. All of a sudden we had something that we could use.

What was this 'moment'?
Jonathan: It was when Javier Carvajal[7] was technically doing my job, in that he oversaw every aspect of the brand. I found these plans for a building he had done; it was a very Brutalist, something you would never have expected from Loewe, and it had been completely forgotten. It was as if all this had never existed.

When was this?
Jonathan: In the 1950s and 1960s.

Does the building still stand?
Jonathan: No, not any more, but we have pictures, and they informed what we did with the store in Japan. It was interesting. Rebranding can create a lot of friction – I had to convince an entire company to change its whole language – but when we started showing the images of Carvajal's work to people at Loewe, they understood what we were doing.

'You can't just be a fashion designer; you have to do everything. Thinking you can just turn up and do the clothing simply isn't possible anymore.'

Publication 4, Menswear Autumn/Winter 2015, photographed by Jamie Hawkesworth

Publication 7, Menswear Spring/Summer 2016, photographed by Jamie Hawkesworth

Do you work with architects on the stores?
Jonathan: I work very closely with the architectural team at Loewe. There is one woman, Paola, who does everything with me. You work with architects when the right project comes up, but at the moment it's not needed.

Are you refurbishing all the shops?
Jonathan: Yes.

Dramatically?
Jonathan: Yes. This might sound a bit precious, but when you inherit a brand that has so many stores internationally, you start to realize that stores are actually public places. So for me there has to be something particular about the space in each location. It's about building a cultural brand today. The one in Miami is interesting because it's as if we took an 18th-century building, dismantled it, and then rebuilt it inside a white box in Miami. Which we kind of did! It's as if M/M has created a platform and I can do whatever I want with it: what we did in Miami is like something from the past, but it is now in the present, and then it becomes part of the future because you can do exhibitions in it. It all can be recontextualized. We used it for an exhibition about Paul Nash[8] and Lucie Rie[9].

Can we talk about the books? Which was the first?
Michael: It was for the first collection, menswear.

The one with the new brand on the cover?
Mathias: Yes, every season there is one book for the men and one for the women, each with a photographic essay by Jamie Hawkesworth. The point of them is that they are content driven. There is always a poem and the photographer Jamie is what I would call a true photographer. He started out as a documentary photographer, and I would say that he has a true photographer's language. So the books have a narrative, which gives them a longer lifespan than just one season.
Jonathan: The latest women's book was shot the day before the show at the UNESCO building in Paris.

So the photography was done very fast.
Jonathan: Oh yes, mega quickly.

But the form of the books, with the cloth covers, seems to imply a slower pace.
Mathias: Yes, producing them is very quick, quite spontaneous, but the way they are treated as objects is very long term. They are signed and numbered.

How do the men's and women's books differ?
Michael: The book for the men is developed around the presentation. There is no show, so this book acts as a lookbook. We use locations in Spain; we travel around to discover places and get inspired. There is something more scripted in the menswear and the poetry is connected to that. But for the women, we shoot the day before the show at the UNESCO building, because Loewe is committed to sponsoring its refurbishment.
Jonathan: At the moment they're restoring these Miró murals.
Jonathan: So we are exploring a different aspect of the building every season.

Tell me about the poetry. Who finds it?
Michael: I do.

Where do you look?
Michael: Everywhere. I have a good method now. It is a secret!

I was struck by the descriptions of the clothes in the books.
Michael: This is something that we implemented at the beginning. We said that the brand should have a voice, so we commissioned a writer for all words that are printed around the campaign, which is something quite new for fashion. Rather than just being used as decoration, every word makes sense. And everything has a caption: the pictures on the white backgrounds have a caption, the silhouettes have a caption, the Meisel pictures have a caption.

These captions seem very meticulous and technical, but they also have flourish.
Michael: They are technically correct, but there is space for a certain amount of licence. They are like something you would find in a museum. Everything is presented to the public. That is what I was talking about when I said we have built a channel; it is really like a Loewe channel.

How are the books distributed?
Jonathan: For someone like me, when I was a fan of M/M, what was really important to me was the printed matter. There is nothing better if you want

'Fashion needs content and I think brands will have to increase the amount they put out tenfold in order to keep the dialogue going.'

Publication 8, Womenswear Spring/Summer 2016, photographed by Jamie Hawkesworth

Publication 10, Womenswear Autumn/Winter 2016, photographed by Jamie Hawkesworth

to engage with fashion and you have no money than being able to get some printed matter like this from the brand. If nothing else, you can get a book. This is incredibly important. It's a way of reaching a different demographic. For me, it has to have the same impact as a bag. You know, it has the same gravitas. It will be interesting to see how brands use content in the next few years. Fashion needs content and I think brands will have to increase the amount they put out tenfold in order to keep the dialogue going.

What do you mean by content?

Jonathan: Well, the book is one thing, but you then take a picture of the book and it becomes a different piece of content. Then you open up the poster that is the cover of the book and you put that on the wall and you have more content. In a way, printed material becomes much more than itself.

Do you see yourself as more of a content creator than a designer at Loewe?

Jonathan: You know, what you realize when you start a rebrand is that you can't just be a designer, you have to do everything. Thinking you can just turn up and do the clothing simply isn't possible anymore.

And you welcome that?

Jonathan: I do. It's more tangible; it's more about curating.

Has it made you rethink your own brand?

Jonathan: Yes, I think so.

Mathias: With his own brand, it is more like he is expressing himself. Here it is as if he were an artist in charge of a museum.

Jonathan: It is a big detachment.

Michael: But at the same time he feels that he is responsible.

Jonathan: I take everything very personally while I am here. If there are not enough bags in store, then that will become my problem. If the till is not working, if there is a problem with the front door, that becomes my problem. That's when I am here, but my week is very compartmentalized, because otherwise I would go crazy.

Let's talk about the advertising.

Jonathan: We're not the biggest advertiser in the world.

Mathias: We adjust to the media that we have. It is very functional. We've created a channel where we can combine the three elements – the past, the present and the future – instead of having them in the same image. In most fashion imagery or advertising they combine those elements – the reference, the product and the prediction – but we've separated them.

Michael: So we have a mood, a girl, and a bag or shoes. It is completely broken down.

Do you design the sets behind the models?

Mathias: Yes, since the first one. It is an evolving background. We try to morph according to the mood of the collection.

Do the backgrounds for the ads bear a relation to the images in the books?

Mathias: We think about it at the same time, and we have already done the advertising for the show that is going to happen next week.

Jonathan: Which involves a commitment that is quite unusual.

Mathias: Jonathan has already been working on this collection for a year and now he is working on the next one, so, in creating the ads before the show happens, we are just telling the truth. It makes more sense now, when you go to a show and there are images from it right away everywhere in the world, and then in the following month companies like Zara are producing clothes like the ones they saw.

Jonathan: It seems be making things faster, but actually it is very relaxed for us. I do two brands now and I am more relaxed than when I was doing one because everything is very organized.

'Ultimately, I'll feel that we have done a good job if someone else is able to step in and the brand can still continue with this logo.'

Mathias: We really connect with this approach because the franticness of trying to do something at the last minute is never something that we really enjoyed. We like things that are planned. Of course there are still chance events and surprises, but I still think it is better to construct a space within which you can express yourself, rather than relying on self-expression for everything.

Jonathan: I get bored if it becomes too exhausting. There's nothing worse. You start to feel like you're saving people's lives, but you're not – there's no urgency.

So do you know what your 'past' references will be in six months' time?

Jonathan: Yeah, we do.

So what will be the past in the future?

Jonathan: The image that we are

putting out this week: it's a nude.
Michael: It is about readdressing male romanticism.
Jonathan: This season is about becoming bored with people wanting to be young. Everyone is obsessed by being young, which is impossible for them to be.

How long have you all been working at Loewe?
Jonathan: Only two and a half years. It all started from one book and now all this! [Jonathan builds a pile of Loewe publications on the floor, which he Instagrams on his personal account.] I am always being asked, 'The industry is getting so fast, how can you do so much work?' and so on. Yes, it is fast and that's kind of great. Just get on with it. It's exciting. If you get the foundations right you can do what you want without overthinking things. Of course, I am very lucky to have people around me. It works because I am collaborating with people. I am not going to pretend that I don't work with other people. I don't think that is how high-fashion houses function anymore. You need all these people or it is impossible.

Have you three ever had a fight?
Jonathan: No.
Mathias: No, no, I think we are too old for this.
Jonathan: I trust them. I like being told what to do sometimes. There are so many aspects; I have to be able to trust other people.

Michael: But in a way it goes back to the idea of the platform that we created. It is not a platform for ego. There is always room for conversation.
Jonathan: I think if you are going to build a multinational brand, a big brand, it is the only way it can work. I have not come into this brand to make it a €100-million business. It has to be bigger than that. I am very open about this. I want it to be a commercial success. And I feel like this platform allows that because it has the energy of not one, but many. That is where luxury has to go in the end. Yes, there is one individual whose head is on the block, but everyone has to be accountable to create energy in the brand. That creates static, which is good.

1. From 1995 to 2000 M/M (Paris) art-directed a series of catalogues for Yohji Yamamoto. Collaborating with photographers including Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin, Craig McDean and David Sims, they created a fantasy in installments that culminated in the retrospective book *Rewind/Forward: 238 Fashion Pictures 1995-2000* in 2001. The catalogues, which are beautifully designed and photographed, and exquisitely produced, are now collectors' items.

2. Luxury conglomerate LVMH bought a minority stake in Anderson's label J.W.Anderson in September 2013. As part of the deal Anderson was appointed creative director at Loewe, another LVMH brand.

3. This original *cautro eles* or four Ls logo was designed in 1970 by Spanish artist Vicente Vela (1931-2015). In an article published in Spanish *Vogue* upon the artist's death, the brand's then president, Enrique Loewe, is said to have described Vela as the 'aesthetic consciousness of Loewe'.

4. Meisel's shoot, originally published in the July 1997 issue of *Vogue Italia*, was inspired by the work of American figurative painter, Alex Katz. Often seen as a portraitist of a certain upper-middle-class East Coast ennui, Katz's work was described by writer Ann Beattie in 1987 as a 'world of alienation, sadness and conflict'.

5. Peter Saville was a recent art-school graduate when he began working for the nascent label Factory Records in 1978. A keen explorer of historical visual culture, he created some of his best-known sleeves by marrying pop music with unlikely graphic forms. Drawn to the classical typography of Jan Tschichold's later years and inspired by postmodern architecture, Saville created a strikingly elegant cover for Joy Division's second album *Closer*. Suggestive of a carved memorial stone, the design became particularly poignant when the band's singer Ian Curtis committed suicide just before its release.

6. Pegasus was designed in 1937-38 by Berthold Wolpe (1905-1989), a German-born British type and book designer, and illustrator. He is perhaps best known for his work with publishers Faber & Faber, where, from 1941 until his retirement in 1975, he created typefaces and book-jacket designs. Among the many typefaces he designed, Albertus is still widely in use, including on all street signs in the City of London.

7. Javier Carvajal Ferrer (1926-2013) was a leading Spanish architect of the 1950s and 1960s. His work included the design of the Spanish pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in New York, and a building for Loewe in Barcelona, which contained corporate offices and a flagship store. His work became increasingly Brutalist as the 1960s progressed, culminating in Torre de Valencia (1968-72), a much-contested high-rise in Madrid.

8. Paul Nash (1889-1946) was a British artist best known for his images of the First World War.

9. A celebrated potter, Lucie Rie (1902-1995) was born in Austria, but fled to the UK after the *Anschluss* in 1938. Her studio was reconstructed in the Victoria & Albert Museum's ceramics gallery after her death.

© Charles Duprat

Boulevard du Palais, Paris 2014

Menswear Autumn/Winter 2016 presentation, Paris

From:
Helmut Lang
To:
Juergen Teller
Subject:
System

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 10 February 2016 at 14:26[1]

Juergen - where the fuck are you and what are you up to ?

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 10 February 2016 at 17:42

Sorry Helmut

Been ill , took me away for a week , I'm ok . The carpet under my feet went off, Sadie's[2] too , haven't felt under the weather like this for a long long time . Family , both sick , who takes Ed to school? Getting out of it , though , felt depressed , birthday times . My mum was 3 weeks ill too. My business partner of 9 years , said he's leaving . Teaching in Germany...[3]
This is probably a honest German answer to your where the fuck are you , question
X j
Sent from my iPad

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 10 February 2016 at 20:18

Welcome to my world . will check in on you tmrw. - stay strong - hug to sadie , ed , mom and you x HL

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 16 February 2016 at 00:03

Hi Juergen. Took me a while to really respond. But my carpet was pulled away too. I just needed time to realize it. x. H

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 16 February 2016 at 04:24

Helmut , I understand . I'm in your homeland , which makes me feel better , back in ' my' health Mayr clinic[4] . How can you live so cut off , nearly entirely on your farm , no driving licence , in the countryside surrounded by the most hideous part of Long Island , not meaning the countryside , but the way of American living ? I've been many times to your place and understand the exquisite way things are at your place , like an oasis within a beautiful setting. I always love staying with you . Still , the same question lingers , how can you live like a hermit?
I'm asking this in the most profound way possible , admirable way as I can see so well it suits you so good and you seem very content .

X Juergen

Sent from my iPad

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 16 February 2016 at 21:30

Juergen Happy you are in the homeland. Visiting is great. Living there is not for us.
The rest of your question will take me a bit - has to do with life , need of being loved and what I have to think about is to explain to you honestly why I am here

Because I never envisioned it. I thought I would end up in Greece and maybe I will.

The driver license is easy to explain. I never had the money for it when I was young and than I never did it later

The rest soon. Have to reflect. But going to Texas in April it seems.

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 16 February 2016 at 22:01

Yes , living in Austria in the country , not an option .
Take your time Helmut , no rush . Funny I remember you mentioned Greece before . Now Sadie and me got a house there .
Never been as a young German , took Sadie and the art world to take me and I fell in love with Greece immediately .

I heard that from many friends , didn't do the licence when young and then it's too late , I understand .

That's exciting , Texas ! You must be going for your art .
x Juergen
Sent from my iPad

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 29 February 2016 at 07:59

hi
helmut
i want to use this picture for our article

Me at 15 by my cousin Helmut Teller

and i am getting more and more busy
waiting for your response cause maybe time is running out.

i loved my time in austria. X

love
juergen

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 29 February 2016 at 08:01

hi juergen ,

thats a genius picture !

juergen , i am catching up today with work i could not do - ready tmrw .

xxx H

Helmut Lang, Burgenland, early 1990s, courtesy of hl-art

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 29 February 2016 at 08:25

Me being 15 or so
Played out by my cousin , also called Helmut (who got me into photography in the first place)
X

Sent from my iPad

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 29 February 2016 at 15:50

Juergen, I don't think hermit is the right description or word. It is true that it is very isolating here and often I feel that way, well, only if I don't leave my property as you know everything around here it is very much New York style active. The story with the isolation is a double edged sword, at least for what I am doing now. It helps me to work without all the distractions I would have in New York. I recently spoke to Roni (Horn)[5] and she is spending her time also mostly in her place and studio upstate, and came to the same conclusion that a healthy degree of solitude provides for an organic flow to work in. You get at ease with the situation. I do go to Manhattan for meetings or seeing friends and other stuff, and naturally there are a lot of friends coming out here (and more) throughout the year as it is really only two hours away. In addition I'm really not alone alone as I am here with my assistant and others, so it's not that dramatic.

I do feel since the beginning of this year that I want to change part of these circumstances and am just thinking about how to do that the right way. It would not even be that surprising for me because life for me has always involved a big change nearly every ten years since I was a child. It's now more than 10 years ago since I stopped working in fashion to solely work in art, and I think I am ready for a different pace. I know that things will be changing again moving forward. Anyway, I will be soon on a plane to Dallas for my exhibition at the Dallas Contemporary which opens in April[6]. I'm pretty sure I'm going to take a plane because the other heartfelt and lovely option proposed by Dennis and Annalisa[7] is that we all go on a luxury tourbus and see parts of America at the same time.

If you've been asking yourself this question for years, you're actually confronting me with the question at the right moment. To be honest, the good thing about working in Long Island is that you can actually see people anytime, but you don't necessarily have to. I will definitely be more in New York, and you have been at my place in the city. I will also be traveling more again as exhibitions are taking me to different places, and so does life.

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 4 March 2016 at 15:35

Juergen, so asking you back - Are you in a more or less perfect place – no pun intended.

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 4 March 2016 at 19:40

Right now ? Yes , working in my studio late evening
Sorry , now it was me who responds late , but that's what I mentioned before, I will get stupid busy.

What you mean - No pun intended?
X Juergen
More later xxx

Sent from my iPad

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 4 March 2016 at 20:42

I meant doppel meaning - Mentally and physically.

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 4 March 2016 at 21:44

Yes , working on my own stuff , my assistants here helping , fun , drinking tea and listening to Deutschland 83 soundtrack[8] , being happy home , working on my Bundeskunsthalle[9] show in Bonn making sculptures , which is super exciting and new for me and putting a supplement together for Travel Almaniac about my nannies wedding on New Year's Day in middle of nowhere in Poland and combining it with my 52 birthday party , which I invited only my polish wedding friends , my office and my Art students from Akademie in Nürnberg where I teach .Wife took my son to theatre , I could sneak back to work , I love it :-)

I will answer your question on the Eurostar train tomorrow and get back to you.
I can see you coming to Greece :-)
Love Juergen

Sent from my iPad

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 5 March 2016 at 10:43

Another one in between
Exciting that you are doing sculptures - How did you get there and what is it about it you are intrigued by?

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 5 March 2016 at 12:25

Right ,
Kind of I love it , we are both doing them now , in a way with our baggage from the past (if I'm correct with yours) , at least some of your sculptures .
Some of them I can't talk about it yet ,
But the main ones with pleasure .
I told you I have this big German government show ,

And then I thought :
Mit dem Teller nach Bonn

And as I have so many self portraits over last 25 years and my name is Teller , which means plate in English , I started to play around with putting my portraits on plates . It's so stupid and obvious , it's really good !
Then I strung this whole idea further and right now producing 1.80 m and 1.20 m diameter plates with me on them .
Looks awesome :-)

My mum will think I lost the plot haha
Then using the Henzel Vivienne Westwood carpet[10] too I think , then thinking about tables too , as gotten inspired by Urs Fischer[11] , who's gonna help me and we exchange works with each other .
Tea cups too , got cushions .

Super excited about it all X
Just gotten to Paris , good old fashion week

Sent from my iPhone

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 6 March 2016 at 01:44

And Helmut , I very much understand the working in solitude , away from it all , you know I've been to Roni's place up state and its heaven being up there with her , I see it also how Sarah Lucas[12] lives and works in Suffolk in the country , where Sadie and her used to share a house together . That's the reason I like my time in the clinic so much , no office , no kids , just walking around in the woods with overweight old people , hihi , not all are that way hihi . I mean it in a nice way . It will be so exciting for you , if your work pushes , forces you to travel a bit , it's so nice . Don't get me wrong Helmut with the original question , Sadie and myself always admired you and the way you made a home for yourself and way of living .I just couldn't do it myself and it slightly bothered me , that I couldn't . Felt and feels like the highest form of zen . Now being nice and sober , I'm getting there :-))) Wonderful morning Helmut and Edward.
In the clinic they said I'm intolerant to eggs .... How stupid of me I thought . Eggs are so nice . Just thinking about your animals while I write this :-)
X j

Sent from my iPad

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 6 March 2016 at 13:56

haha , everytime someone says eggs is english i think of balls - eggs in austrian are balls - of course i made some sculptures of it - abstract ones - but i just thought i might cast real ones from everyone who is willing to stand in …..
kind like teller and plate - what you are doing sounds really exiting , send some pictures if you can , i am curious .

how is that clinic in austria - i saw the pdf of the book but i don't really understand what they do - you seem to really like it .

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 8 March 2016 at 20:30

where are you, lost ?

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 8 March 2016 at 21:06

I still have to work to make my living , locked in the headquarters of LV for days and obviously it's a lot of fun and great pictures . Remember fashion week ? That's why I wanted to start earlier as I'm not so lucky as you being able to be in semi retirement , another thing I'm envy of you X Soon more I'm photographing now
I don't use the term of shooting , I never liked that in the first place , but here in Paris doesn't feel at all appropriate this term
Xxx j

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 8 March 2016 at 21:50

no problem - but get the semi retirement out for your head - i am working like a dog and its a full time - full on situation.

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 9 March 2016 at 13:10

I know I know . But you took it easy for a while , right

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 8 March 2016 at 20:36

yes , because my carpet got also pulled out as you put it before …. nearly at the same time .

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 8 March 2016 at 22:45

I love having these emails back and forth with you ,You know I came to email and computer very late , digital photography only 3 years ago. I always liked a one to one , but have to say I like this email thing with you

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 8 March 2016 at 22:55 EST

well , i love it too – someone will call the " schmalz police " soon – whenever y get to it give me the run down on the clinic …

X

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 9 March 2016 at 13:40

I will send you some plate images soon , not ready yet and tell you about clinic too .Now , let's talk about your new work please , Dallas show , I'm very curious indeed . As system magazine I believe wished for some fashion wisdom from you , but I'm not gonna go there , or should we ? Then their question was , what will be the imagery ? Let's use all your work or pictures or what you like , I'm happy with my picture I send you being 15 years old . What you think ?
X j

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 9 March 2016 at 21:27

the dallas show is called BURRY - which is kind of a heavy contaminated sheepskin. i made leaning planes , somehow on the intersection of sculpture and painting - it is sheepskin transformed and hardened with tar reversing all meaning and retaining only the memory of the material . it touches also on the golden fleece but very abstract and not on the greek mythologie but rather on the real events which was using sheepskins as a way of capturing and separating gold from alluvial fluids . somehow it has a royal power although i never thought about that while working .

i made the first piece in 2008 and then more in 2012 to 2014 and added some wood sculptures and hanging sculptures the last 2 month .

i think its quite strong - ready to be handed over to the public.

i am ready too . its done .

Otherwise - I think we should not talk about fashion, we just gonna sound like two old men….

Your picture is genius !!!! I am considering my ass as of now at the age 55 to counter your picture but am still checking …..

How many pictures do they want?

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 10 March 2016 at 06:26

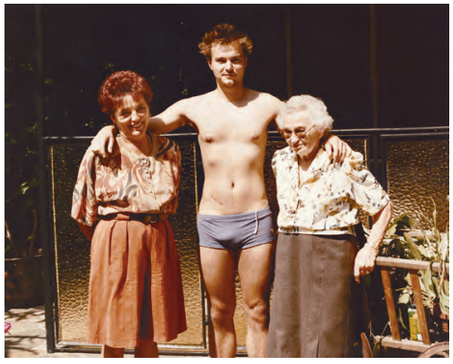
Helmut Lang Long Island, 2006. Helmut Lang Studio, Long Island, 2016, courtesy of hl-art

Sounds super good and I can see you thought this through very carefully and precise . I like the sound of it . Really want to see it . It's really open what they want in terms of imagery . Yes we are old and too old for fashion comments I agree .
As my mum and my grand parents always said , it was better in the olden days .

I'm not saying it :)
My folks were saying it :-)

I'm doing ass exercises myself , my doctor said my ass is too weak and my front thighs far too strong . Football you see , typical football body damaged result . Next time check out my tight ass . As long as I'm not getting too bored with this exercise . It's tedious to say the least .

I thought maybe that one image of mine , maybe one of my new sculptures , Same for you , my very first self portrait with my mum and Oma and a installation picture or picture (s) of your work .
Just arriving in London , so pleased and off to the country tomorrow evening for fresh air and little bit of peace



X j

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 10 March 2016 at 04:38

so we are dealing with the same stuff - my thighs a way to strong too - walking all my life and 3 times broken leg from skiing , a motorbike running over my foot when i was four - ankle smashed - and a gigantic tumor removed from thigh when i was nine . so , there you go -

i am unfortunatly to unanimated for stretching and exercise but maybe i take it up after dallas . i should really do it.
where do you and sadie have your country house or are you sharing with Sarah?

x H

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 10 March 2016 at 10:41

My mother, grandmother and me. Bubenreuth, 1993

My lord , sounds like you had a crazy early life in Austria.
Stretching is good I tell you.
Sadie did share a house in Suffolk with Sarah , it belonged to Benjamin Britten , the composer[13] . She ended up selling her share to Sarah and bought another one in a even more beautiful surrounding landscape .

Sent from my iPad

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 10 March 2016 at 15:49

Well if you can do it , i can do it - i will take it up till i am as flexible like a german/ austrian brezel - going for a beach speed walk now - getting in shape for things to come .

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 10 March 2016 at 16:08

In Paris , I get up very early and go swimming and do a head stand , while the rest of my crew go to fashion party's till early hours. They are young though

Sent from my iPad

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 10 March 2016 at 18:03

i remember, i was doing the same program like your crew - its actually the best exercise ever and not boring at all. miss it.

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 13 March 2016 at 22:37

juergen , you were an " einzelkind[14] " --------- i will never forget when you said once - i was a einzelkind , i need a lot of attention - which i thought was hysterically funny and honest -

where are you today with that and what do you expect or wish for your life to be?

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 14 March 2016 at 04:07

How funny , did I say it like that . There must have been a context to it .
But yes , it is so true ,
I was my grandmothers favourite grandson , I loved her so much too . So all the attention was on me with the women in our family , aunt included . There is an ugly reason for it though , I think they all gave me so much love and protection , because

of my father , his alcohol fuelled aggression , the violence , physical against my mum , sometimes , rarely direct against me . Never he spoke to me , never did anything with me .
So it was the women who protected and gave me everything . Overprotected me. On one level I had an easy ride and on the other side , I've seen terrible things , kids shouldn't see .

Hey , I don't want to sound dramatic as most family's have their issues ....

Where am I today ?
With my wife and 2 children and thank god I have them and give them my love but Sadie and Lola[15] say , I'm selfish in some respects and can't see the other sides . So in this new family set up , there is so many things to think about , everyone's needs etc .
Before it was my bad dad and the only thing counted was to safe me from him . So it was always me first , when I was little .
Does that make sense to you ?

On the other hand if I wouldn't be so focused and selfish I would never have the drive to push on , to work hard , to press the limits of my imagination . My dad somehow always considered me a loser and I have this complex still and this urgent need of always have to proof myself . Deep down I'm very insecure . My parents both worked in our factory , I came home alone from school , school in Germany finishes at 1 . I was mostly on my own then ,

not doing homework, my mum had no time checking my homework and escaping into the woods behind our house .
Good question Helmut
X j

Sent from my iPhone

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 14 March 2016 at 16:10

To answer the sec part more clearly ,
I'm happy were I am ,
I'm happy that I care for my family , I'm happy that I can give . Unlike my dad

Sent from my iPhone

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 14 March 2016 at 16:12

I still need a lot of attention , so does my son and it drives me crazy when he gets all the attention when I want it from Sadie . We laugh about it though. X

From: Helmut Lang
To: Juergen Teller
Date: 14 March 2016 at 20:22

yap , life can fuck you up early and then either you come out stronger and have that drive and love to push forward or it fucks you up entirely and you go down - i had rather bad stuff going on myself till i was 18 and quite like you i feel similar on using the past as engine and not as excuse , but we know its hard sometimes and i feel that it left us with longing for more love than our close one's can give us all the time - its impossible - but it's funny that this need does not go away - feeling safe , secure and loved is what we all want but maybe we want to much of it in our private lives - it might seem selfish as you say , not intentionally - its something to deal with the ongoing and find the balance for one self - would be easier sometimes . but its like weather - you can't really influence it - it changes and you have to deal with it. well , there is no such thing as a constant human condition of total happiness - and the struggles actually grow us into something better and bigger and push everything forward, ironically much more than being always balanced - happiness is actually not the best engine for creativity - so one has to take the good with the complicated. but as G .B. shaw said " a life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable , but more useful than a life spent doing nothing ."there is another quote (have to look it up) saying …… at least we showed up for life and we have the scars to proof it …don't mean it dramatic too , and we did both show up !!! Do you need attention physically (sexual) or emotionally to be reassured - think about it , we all need both but what is the more important issue going forward ?i think for both of us i would say on a professional level we have the ability to be very self assured in our work after we gave all our best and tried as hard as we could - and able to infuse a dose of humor and lightness.

From: Juergen Teller
To: Helmut Lang
Date: 14 March 2016 at 21:10

Emotionally I need attention

1. All times are in GMT.

2. Sadie Coles is the owner of Sadie Coles HQ, a London contemporary-art gallery. She is Juergen Teller's wife. The couple has one child, a son called Ed.

3. Teller has been a professor of photography at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste Nürnberg since 2014.

4. The FX Mayr Health Center is in Maria Wörth-Dellach on the shores of Lake Wörthersee in Austria. It specializes in the FX Mayr cure, which uses 'targeted fasting and conscious abstinence make a new lightness possible'.

5. Roni Horn is an American visual artist and writer with a strong attachment to Iceland.

6. Lang's show *Burry* will run April 16-August 23, 2016, at Dallas Contemporary, Dallas, Texas.

7. Dennis Freedman, creative director at Barney's, New York; Annalisa Milella, New York correspondent for Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*.

8. The soundtrack to German miniseries *Deutschland 83* features a selection of homegrown and international 1980s music, including Peter Schilling's 'Major Tom', Nena's '99 Luftballons' and New Order's 'Blue Monday'.

9. Teller's solo show *Mit dem Teller nach Bonn* will be at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn from June 10-September 25, 2016.

10. In 2013, Teller collaborated with Swedish luxury rug maker Henzel Studios. The result was a handknotted wool and silk rug based upon a 2009 photograph he took of a nude Vivienne Westwood reclining on a sofa.

11. Urs Fischer is a Swiss artist known for his installations. In a profile in the *New Yorker*, he was described as a 'perfectionist in imperfection' by curator Francesco Bonami.

12. Sarah Lucas is a contemporary artist. She represented Great Britain at the 2015 Venice Biennale.

13. British composer Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) is perhaps best-known for his opera *Peter Grimes* and choral work *War Requiem*.

14. The German word for 'only child'.

15. Lola is Teller's daughter from his relationship with Venetia Scott.

The brand questionnaire: Jeremy Scott

By Loïc Prigent

When did you first understand that you were going to become a brand?
When M/M (Paris) created my first logo – that was when I first saw myself as a brand.

What are the Jeremy Scott brand values?
Fun, fun, fun!

How would you define the fun that the Jeremy Scott brand promises its customers?
My clothes are often colourful and whimsical, with a twist on the familiar, in a playful new way. I believe the fun is in every stitch!

How would you define the fun promised by the Moschino brand?
Haute cartoon!

How does Jeremy Scott cola taste?
Sweet, but with a kick!

What shape is the building for the Jeremy Scott hotel?
The same as my bust, of course.

What would be the slogan for Jeremy Scott, the brand?
Live the dream!

What cities are associated with your logo?
New York, Beverly Hills and Paris.

What's the weirdest object you've put your name on?
A condom.

What's the sexiest thing you've put your name on?
A condom.

What do you think about everybody in fashion, including editors, being their own brand these days?
More power to them!

On a scale from 0 to 10, how snobbish are you?
Maybe a two; I'm pretty chill.

What can you instantly recognize more of: logos or types of birds?
Logos outweigh birds, hands down – and I'm taking about all logos, not just fashion brands.

What are the perks of being a brand?
Well, I get a lot of love from people. It's nice when you can make someone you've never met happy just by being you!

Photograph by Giampaolo Sgura

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